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October 1991

Super NES Introduction—What's New?

JVC and Lucasfilm Bring *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* to the NES—DO THEY HAVE THE FORCE?

WINTER COMPUTER GAMES UPDATE

MAPS AND TIPS:
Renovation Products' *Gaiares*, Part I

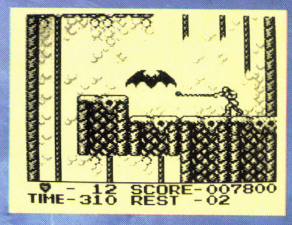


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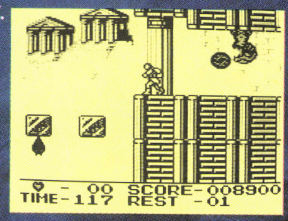
LOOKS LIKE DRAC'S BACK IN TOWN.

Something immortal is lurking in the mountains above Transylvania. The Prince of Darkness has formed a monolith of unspeakable horror in the second ghastly adventure, Castlevania II—Belmont's Revenge™. Four towering castles ridden with hideous creatures that would even make the mightiest of warriors cower in fear.



Nevertheless, Christopher Belmont must set out to face mobile brain matter, undead assassins, and the Iron Doll in the Stone Castle. Ghastly forces like Kumlo & Nimbler and flesh feeding jellyfish slither through the Cloud Castle. The Plant Castle is the horrific home of Angle Mummy, carnivorous Wolf Spiders and other slimy swamp mutants. And an unspeakable array of acid spewing snake heads and moat monsters lurk in the Crystal Castle. It's crucial that you find power up items to attain battle axes and holy water, your only hope against this underworld army.

So grab your Mystic Whip and say your good-byes. Darkness will soon be upon you.





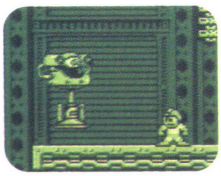
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MegaMan to go.



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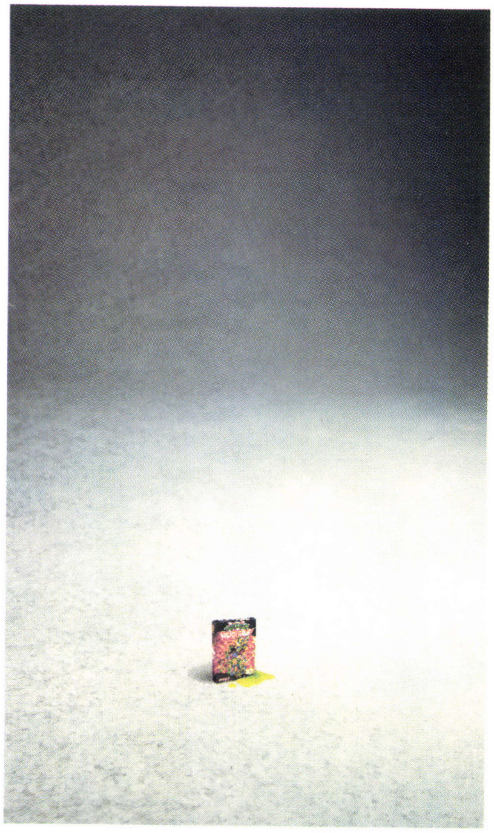
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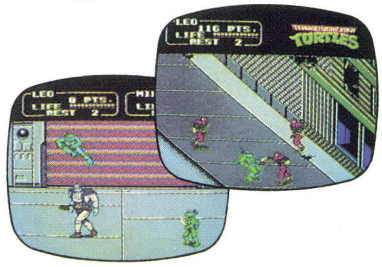
The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Have Mutated Again.



Strong new enemies like Tora the Polar Beast will frost your shell.

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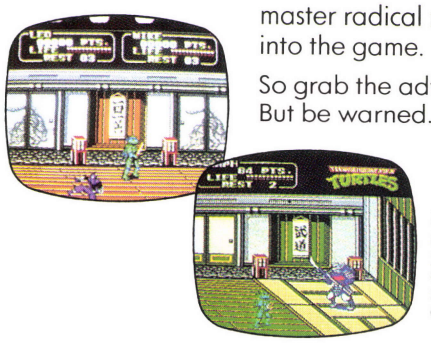


Radical new attack moves really punch up the arcade-style graphics.

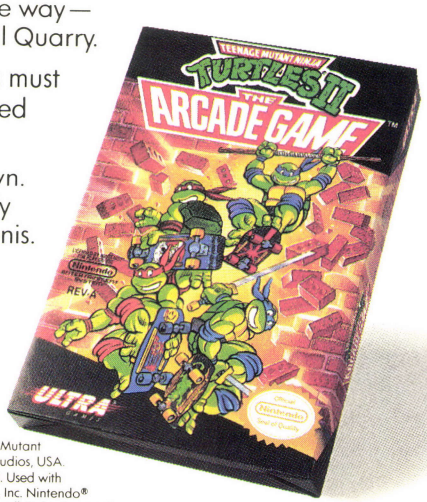
Fortunately two can play at this game, double teaming Shredder's 700 Foot Soldiers who will fight you every step of the way—from the Central Park Snow Route to the stone cold Rock 'N Roll Quarry.

Of course to crush invincible enemies like Tora and Shogun, you must master radical new attack moves which Splinter has programmed into the game.

So grab the adventure that's hotter than a radioactive meltdown. But be warned. You might turn green, grow a shell and suddenly start craving jumbo pizzas with extra pepperonis.



In the never before seen Ninja Castle, you'd be wise to choose a partner before you pick a fight.



ULTRA® GAMES

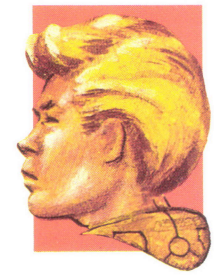
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CIRCLE #103 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Cover: Two-thirds of the *Star Wars* trilogy is coming to the NES, bringing the adventures of Luke Skywalker to millions of gamers everywhere. Mike Davila takes a sneak peek at these two carts on page 62, and Rusel DeMaria and Zach Meston rate *Star Wars* in our review section (page 34).
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contents



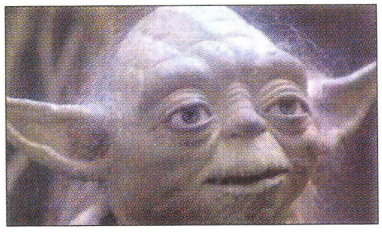


OCTOBER 1991

FEATURES

25
VG&CE'S GAME LINE
Call (900) 45-GAMES for tips, Easter eggs, games and all the late-breaking video-game industry news and events.

54
GAIARES STRATEGY GUIDE, PART I
by Donn Nauert
Gulfer is going to take over Earth unless you hop in your ship and blast off. Can you handle the assignment? We're here to help if you need it.



62
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK PREVIEW
by Mike Davila
The second installment in the Star Wars *trilogy will be coming to the NES soon. Mike tells you what you can expect to see.*

66
THE SUPER NES INTRODUCTION
by Donn Nauert
The SNES is finally hitting the streets after much anticipation and controversy. What are the first titles that you will see on store shelves? Donn's got lots of information to answer that question.

76
ONLINE WITH SIERRA
by Arnie Katz and Bill Kunkel
Longtime software developer has delved into a new area: online gaming. Learn about this new play-by-modem service.

84
SUMMER CES: COMPUTER GAMING PUSHES QUALITY
by Arnie Katz, Bill Kunkel and Joyce Worley
The Summer CES is the traditional place for the introduction of new software. Our experts give you a glimpse of what you'll be seeing this winter.

DEPARTMENTS

EDITOR'S LETTER 6
READER MAIL 10
TIP SHEET 12
NEWS BITS 18
EASTER EGG HUNT 26
DESTINATION ARCADIA 80
ADVERTISER INDEX 96
INSIDE GAMING 110
GAMING ON THE GO 112
GAME DOCTOR 114

REVIEWS



34
VIDEO-GAME REVIEWS
Star Wars, Bonk's Revenge, Super Spy Hunter, NHL Hockey, Marvel Land, Trog, TV Sports: Hockey, Ms. Pac-Man *and* Ryne Sandberg Plays Bases Loaded 3.

94
COMPUTER-GAME REVIEWS
The Gold of the Aztecs, Chuck Yeager's Air Combat, Das Boot: German U-Boat Simulator, Eye of the Beholder, Ultima Worlds of Adventure 2: Martian Dreams, *and* Strip Poker Three.



106
COMPUTER-GAME STRATEGIES
by Ed Dille and Roger White, Jr.
Settle down and listen while our disk jockeys help you become a Red Baron *and get yourself back to* Command HQ.

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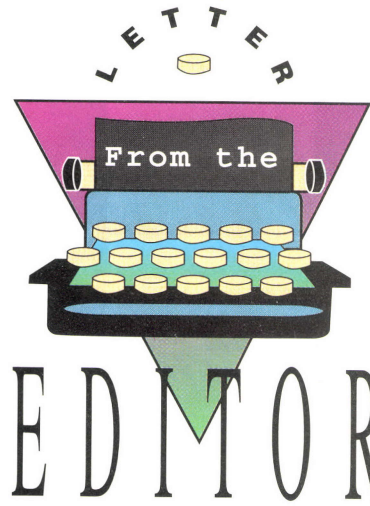
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ANDY EDDY
Art Director
CATHERINE RUNDELL DUNN
Associate Editors
DONN NAUERT
MICHAEL DAVILA
Assistant Art Director
BRIAN SPIELVOGEL
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JE PUBLISHER'S REPRESENTATIVES
Address all inquiries:
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Los Angeles, CA 90064
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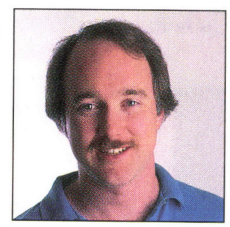
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Oftimes, when a computer is shown in science fiction, it is treated like a person, with the ability to speak and understand spoken commands. For instance, there was the sedate yet mischievous HAL in *2001,* and, of course, the computer from the *Star Trek* TV shows and movies. One of my favorite scenes is from *Star Trek 3* where the crew is warped back to (our) modern times. Scotty, without a thought of the time period's "restrictive" computers picks up the mouse and talks into it, as if it were a microphone.



However, I recently had the opportunity to play with a product that is bringing that future of computers to the market *today.* A company called Articulate Systems has created a device for the Macintosh called the Voice Navigator, which allows you to enter commands by speaking into a microphone. Believe me, it's really quite a kick to "tell" your computer what to do—and have it respond!

Like any naive child growing up, Voice Navigator needs to be taught what to do. A supplementary program handles the "teaching" part, where you speak a word or phrase that will be tied to a particular command. That allows you to customize the command set; you could instruct the program to save a file with as simple a word as "save" or a custom phrase like "keep this one." Voice Navigator also has a level of voice recognition, which makes it hard for others to use your computer.

Of course, all this technology comes at a cost. First of all, each chunk of speech you input in the teaching mode is saved for reference. It could quickly fill up a hard drive in time—larger hard drives are a requirement for today's computer user. And the program itself isn't tiny either.

The first thing that people think about when the subject of talking to a computer comes up is true speech recognition. Unfortunately, you can't talk to Voice Navigator and have it turn the chatter into a text file. I suppose we're still a little ways away from that type of voice recognition on a consumer level.

I could only imagine what a game like *Tetris* or *Sonic* would be like with voice commands—"left, LEFT, *LEFT*!!" Certainly, the use of a joystick or control pad would be far more precise than yelling out commands for a shooter, but the only thing holding back an adventure lover would be the programming of the commands. Many companies are looking at this type of interface for their future products.

Even wilder is the promise of virtual reality in the home, where the player wears a visor that changes the graphics to represent where the player is looking. That's something to ponder, but I've run out of room.

"Computer, keep this one."

—Andy Eddy, Executive Editor

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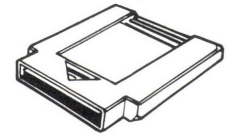
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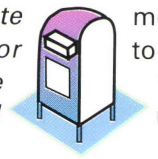
NEEDS A DEFINITION

Dear VG&CE:

In a couple of years, a new generation of HDTV (high-definition television) will emerge. How will it affect all video-game machines?

—Ernesto Felix
Las Banos, California

Good question, Ernesto. Unfortunately, it's one that doesn't have an easy answer. The HDTV standards haven't, as far as we know, been decided on in the U.S., so it will be hard to tell how this will impact current video-game console output. A likely guess, though, is that an HDTV set will be switchable between HDTV and present NTSC standards—it won't be an overnight conversion, and all current TVs can't possibly become obsolete overnight. This conversion, for consumers as well as all the different video providers, will take some time.



REVIEW ACCOLADES?

Dear VG&CE:

I would like to correct some misleading information pertaining to the reviews of Accolade's (Ballistic) two newest games for the Sega Genesis, *HardBall!* and *Star Control*, that appeared in the August issue

The reviews and the ratings given to both of these games imply that they were based on completed product. In fact, neither Neil Shapiro, who "reviewed" *Star Control* nor Josh Mandel, who "reviewed" *HardBall!*, were looking at final versions of these games at the time they wrote their assessments. The cartridges we provided to VG&CE were still at "beta" stage and were meant for preview only.

In an effort to help you get new game information to your readers as soon as possible, it is common for game manufacturers like Accolade to provide your magazine with early preview copies of cartridges. We know your readers want the scoop on new games that are coming out sometimes four, even six months down the road. We're more than happy to work with you to make this possible, but sometimes the versions of the games we send you are still missing major features and final touches. For this reason, it seems misleading to "review" a product that is not complete, and even more misleading to your readers to grade a product on your 1-to-10-rating scale before it has reached its finished state.

For example, *Star Control* was rated a 5 on sound and music. I would like to inform your readers that the sound effects and music were the very last major feature to go into the game and were not in the version that Neil Shapiro was using. *Star Control* is a 12-megabit game, of which more than five are specifically dedicated to music and sound. We're very confident that the game takes full advantage of the Genesis' wonderful sound potential. The feedback we're receiving from gamers who have already purchased it have confirmed this.

Further, while there was nothing factually incorrect in the *HardBall!* review, there were features and final details put into the game after Josh Mandel reviewed it that perhaps would have given him a better overall impression. As you know, any product in development, including a video game, is constantly going through changes and upgrades. While looking at a product still under development can give us a good first impression, it seems only appropriate to look at it in its entirety before a final judgement is passed.

VIDEO GAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT is a fine magazine that covers the gaming industry to its fullest detail. I think you could service your readers even better by separating your reviews of final games from your previews of games that are incomplete. If this isn't possible, it seems only fair to your readers that you inform them up front when you're reviewing or rating a game that is still in development.

—Charlotte Taylor Skeel
Corporate Communications Manager
Accolade, Inc.
San Jose, California

Andy Eddy replies: We apologize for what was obviously a miscommunication between VG&CE *and Accolade. Certainly, from the reports we have been receiving, the consumers are enjoying both* Hardball! *and* Star Control. *We understood that the games we were provided were in final form.*

VG&CE *generally doesn't offer previews of upcoming games because things change so much, often until final release. We're working on something to change our ability to better cover last-minute products and changes.*

Thanks, Charlotte, for bringing this to our attention.

Letters to be considered for publication should be addressed to *Reader Mail*, VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210. Letters may be edited for style, clarity and space considerations. We regret that we cannot respond to all mail received.

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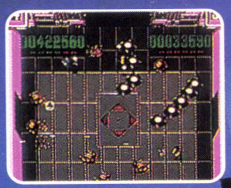
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CIRCLE #106 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Even the best player has trouble with a game now and again, but where can you turn for help? VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT has designed ***Tip Sheet*** to give you, the reader, answers to questions such as, "How do I defeat the end boss on this level?" or, "I've looked everywhere, but I can't find the blue vase." So if you're having a problem on a game, write to us, and our group of experts will do everything they can to solve it. Send your letters to

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Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Attn: *Tip Sheet*

TIP SHEET

by Donn Nauert

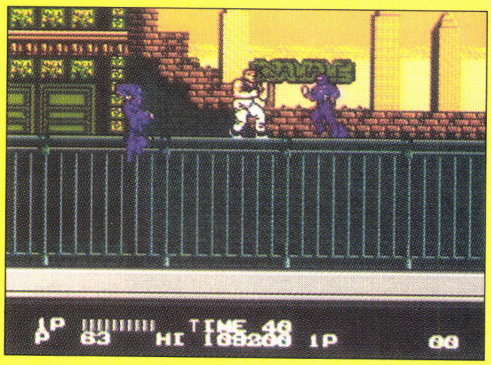
I recently completed the game *Sword of Vermillion*. But I can't figure out the use of the Joke Book, small bomb and the vase. Also, where do you find the Kalm vase? And what is so mysterious about the Mysterious Tree?

—David Lopez
Miami, Florida

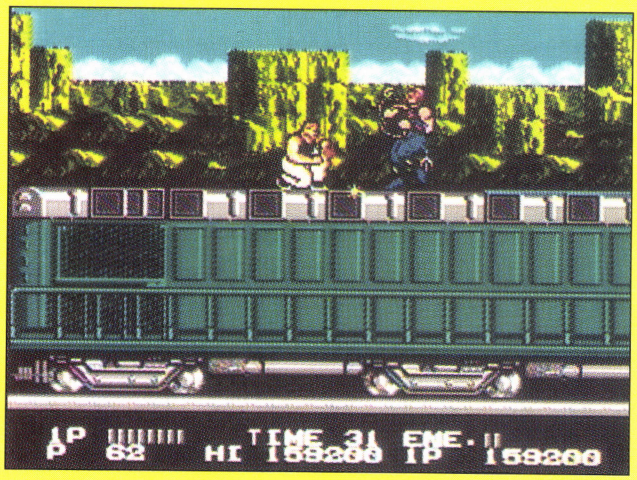
The Joke Book, small bombs and the vase are items that you can buy from the merchant. It's not important what you buy, just as long as you buy something. However, the vase can be sold later for a lot of money. The same merchant will give you the Sword of Vermillion later on in the game. The Kalm vase has no use and is, therefore, not worth looking for. The references to the Mysterious Tree are misleading clues designed to send you on a wild goose chase.

I can't seem to get past the fifth level on *Bad Dudes*. Can you please give me some hints?

—Mike Costill
Hilliard, Ohio



*Level 5 is much like Level 2 except this time you're moving to the left at a faster pace. One of the keys in passing this level is to move closer to your enemies as they appear on the screen. This will prevent the ninja that throws the shurikens from being able to throw all three across the train cars. Once you reach the enemies, press D to duck and then attack. You have a longer reach when you do the foot sweep. Of course, it helps if you can get a weapon, especially the nunchaku. You can also press B,A,D,U,D,U on Controller 2, then **START** on Controller 1 during the title screen. This will give you 64 men to start the game with.*



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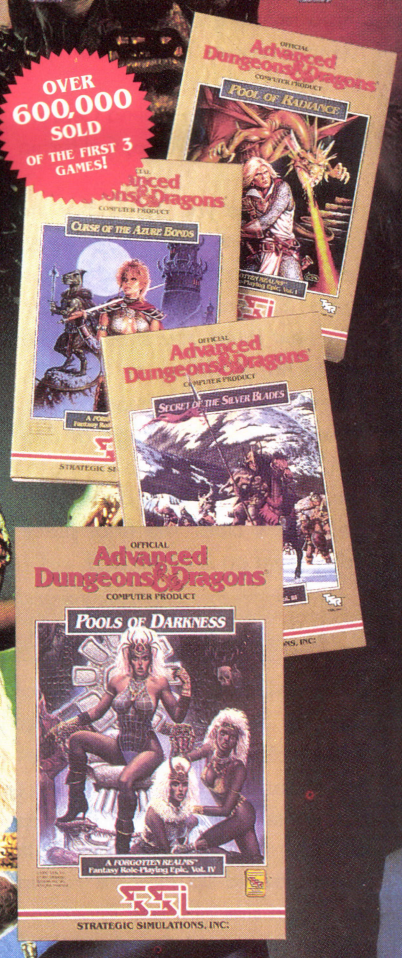
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For SSI's complete product catalog, send $1.00 to: Strategic Simulations, Inc., 675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086.

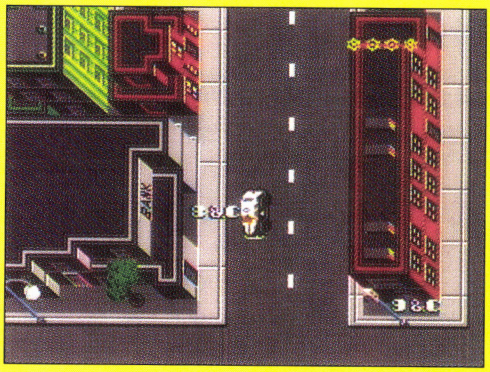
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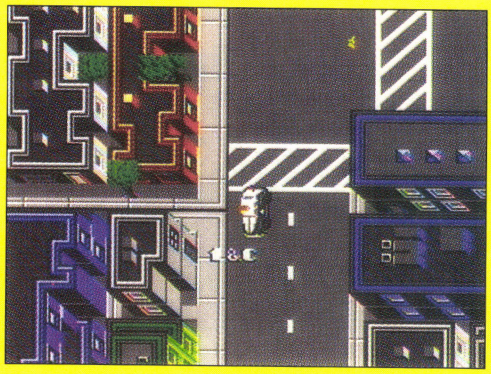
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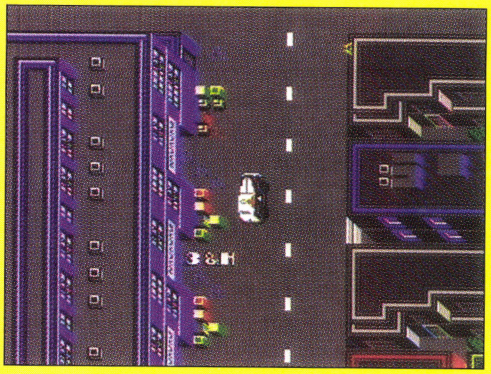
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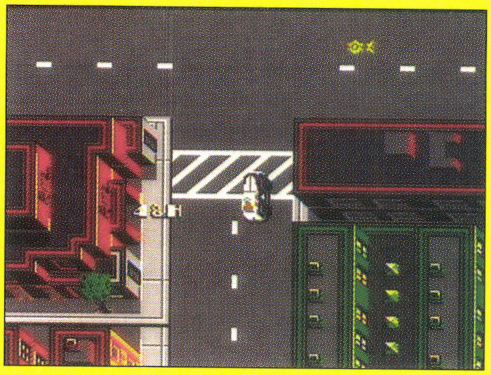
My cousin let me borrow his NES game *Dick Tracy*. I've solved Cases 1 through 4. Now I'm stuck on Case 5. I've found four clues, but I can't find the last one. What also confuses me is why there are three or more clues that all say "empty money bags." Can you help me?

—Selina Cebrero
San Diego, California









The first clue you get is that the bank at 8th & C had been robbed. You'll also find a clue there. But you should ignore it. The next thing you should do is go to the building at 1st & C, where you'll find a money bag. Next, go to the garage at 3rd and H, and get the clue there. Now go back to the bank, and get a new clue. The final place you should go is at 4th & H.

I have *Miracle Warriors, Seal of the Dark Lord*, by Sega, and have invested countless hours cataloging pages of notes and kept the enclosed game world map current with pins, notes, etc. I have all my companions, all the weapons, have found all the magical items, racked up massive currency, fangs, valor and strength, and experience bars are almost maximum. I now need to find three keys that will take me to where the Dark Lord is for the final conflict and the completion of the game. Please, what do I have to do or where do I have to go to get these three last keys?

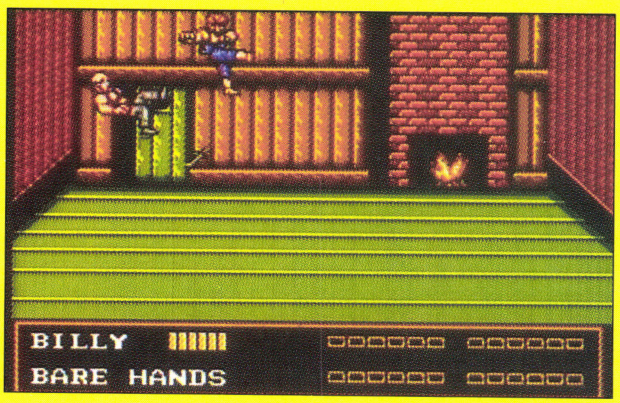
—G. Cannon
Placerville, California

To find the three keys, start at Tegea on the continent of Areos. Move 16 small squares south until you reach a block of sand by itself. Now press Button 2. To enter the monument that has appeared, use the spell "Come, Iason." Search for a treasure chest that contains the heaven key. To find the Earth key, starting from Tegea, take 16 small squares west and repeat the process. And for hell key, take ten small squares north from Tegea. To reach the Dark Lord, go six squares west of where you find hell's key. You'll reach Iason's monument, which is also called Gorkis Shrine.

I can't pass Level 2 on *Double Dragon 3*. Any hints would be helpful.

—Billy Gaskins
Pine, Colorado





The best move to use in the game is the spin kick. You can perform the move by pressing the A and B buttons at the same time. It's much easier to do if you have a controller with auto-fire. Simply adjust both buttons so that you can press and hold the buttons and automatically do a spin kick. When you reach the final room at the end of the level, move as close to the door (at the left) as possible and do the spin kick. When the level boss, CHIN SEIMEI, appears, move down. Wait for him to move toward you, and when he gets near, do the spin kick. Then move up and wait for him again. Repeat until you defeat CHIN SEIMEI.

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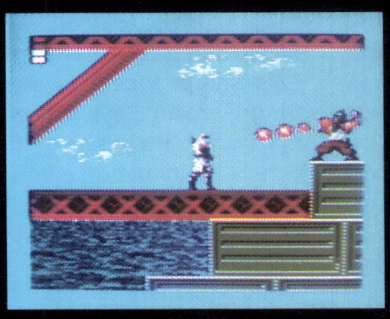
Game Gear™ turns the whole world into your personal playground. That's because the new color portable video game system from Sega™ comes ready to play and packed with possibilities. For one thing, every Game Gear comes with the popular Sega hit, COLUMNS™, pictured left. And that's just the beginning. With Game Gear you can play arcade favorites like G-LOC™, SUPER MONACO GP™ and SHINOBI™ anywhere you want. Or run, climb and leap through the CASTLE OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE. And lots more games are on the way. They all look great because Game Gear has 32 on-screen colors out of a palette of 4096. The back-lit screen means you can play in any kind of light. Even total darkness. And don't forget Game Gear's many optional features. Plug in the TV Tuner** and your Game Gear becomes a hand held color television. Plug in headphones and you've got multi-channel stereo sound. Game Gear also has the added convenience of multiple power sources. It operates on batteries, an AC adapter or a car adapter. So wherever you go, you've got power to spare. Remember, there're lots of ways to go. But with Game Gear you go in style.



G-LOC



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SHINOBI



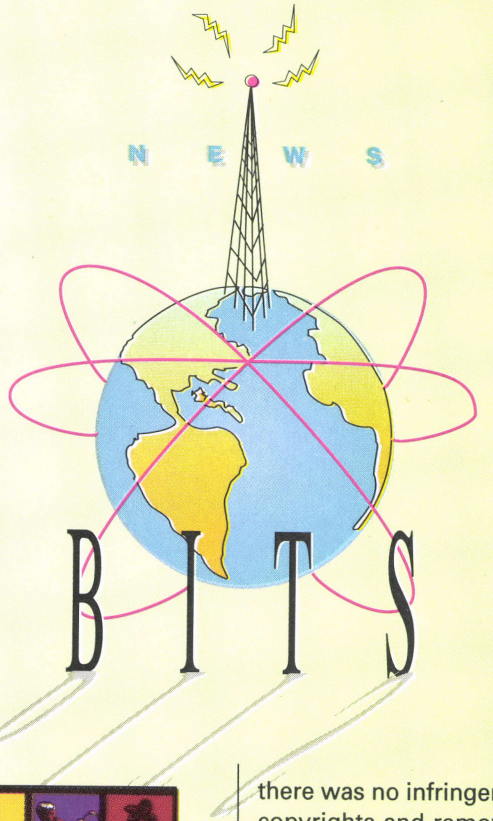
CASTLE OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE

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COMPILED BY
JOYCE WORLEY



EA Introduces New Brand Name

Electronic Arts is marketing sports games under a new moniker. The company announced a new sub-brand, called Electronic Arts Sports Network (EASN), and has plans for a complete line of sports titles for video-game and computer play to be introduced in 1991 and 1992.

This autumn's releases under the new brand are *John Madden's Football*, *PGA TOUR Golf* and *Lakers vs. Celtics and the NBA Playoffs*, for the Super NES. *Earl Weaver Baseball* will be for play on the Sega Genesis, and *Jordan vs. Bird: One on One* will have new life on the Game Boy.

The EASN titles aim at TV quality sound and the maximum graphic effects for each hardware system. They also have an "expert system" artificial intelligence and as much statistical and visual accuracy as possible.

Other sports games currently in development include hockey, football, auto racing and golf. According to EA's Senior Vice-President, Bing Gordon, "We are dramatically increasing the details in animation, statistical modeling, expert advice and sound effects, while adding new features like multiple-camera angles." He went on to speak of future plans for the EASN line: "We're looking forward to the day when CD storage devices are popular, to add other dimensions like live video announcers and the use of actual game footage of real players."





Toy Maker Wins, Game Genie Heads to U.S.

The long-pending trial of *Nintendo v. Lewis Galoob Toys* finally reached its end, and NES gamers are the big winners. The judge ruled that there was no infringement of copyrights and removed the restrictions imposed earlier that prohibited Lewis Galoob from marketing the Game Genie in the United States.

Nintendo had claimed that the Game Genie device, which allows the gamer to reconfigure Nintendo game play (by granting additional lives, strength, slow- or fast-motion and other user-selectible features) infringed on their business by making the games less challenging. U.S. District Court Judge Fern Smith disagreed, saying she believed "no harm would be done to Nintendo's future business by the Game Genie." Trial counsel Glick explained her decision saying that "the doctrine of fair use will allow consumers to use the Game Genie for their own personal enjoyment."

Lewis Galoob Toys plans further litigation to pursue recovery from Nintendo of lost profits that the company incurred because of the injunction that kept it from selling the product in this country.

The Game Genie, previously sold only in Canada, will be widely available in the U.S. this winter and will retail for about $50.

Tod Zipnick, ICOM Founder Dies at Age 36

The electronic-gaming industry was shocked to learn of the death of ICOM Simulations founder Tod Zipnick, from Hodgkin's disease, at age 36. The great gamesman was survived by his wife and family.

Tod founded ICOM Simulations in 1986. The company's first product, created by a team headed by Tod, was the ground-breaking *Déjà Vu*, which pioneered point-and-click technology in adventure games. Always a visionary, Tod spearheaded the company's efforts on the first full-motion CD game, *Sherlock Holmes.*

Tod had been inactive for the past year at ICOM due to illness. The new president, Dennis Defensor, spoke to VG&CE about his longtime friend: "Tod's vision started ICOM. He directed and was always aiming for break-through products. His legacy to the company he founded is this forward-reaching attitude, to always reach for something just beyond the current state of the art."

The entire staff of VG&CE extends sympathies to the family, friends and

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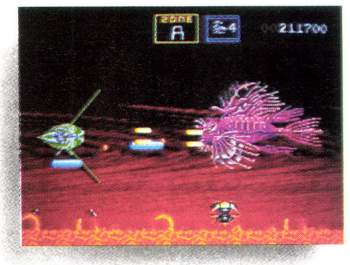


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associates of a great gamer, who'll be sincerely missed.



ASC Releases Treasure Master

This autumn American Softworks Corporation will release *Treasure Master*, an action-packed NES video game that will allow gamers to compete for up to $250,000 in fantasy prizes.

The game contains five worlds that are accessible to players. On March 14, 1992, ASC will announce a secret password on MTV and Nickelodeon that will unlock the sixth "Treasure World." Gamers will then have 12 hours to complete the final world, after which a winner code will appear on the last screen. Winners then call a hotline to claim their prize.

American Softworks Corp.
228 East 45th St.
New York, NY 10017
(212) 972-6262

Magnavox Unveils CD-I

Philips Consumer Electronics made a dramatic reentry into the home electronic-media industry with its introduction of the Magnavox Compact Disc Interactive (CD-I). This console, dubbed the Magnavox CD1910, attaches to a television and stereo system to deliver audio, video, text, graphics, animation and interactive capabilities. It looks and operates similarly to an audio CD player, and programs are encoded on CD-I discs that look like standard 5" audio CD discs.



The equipment uses digital video and audio processing menu-driven operation (using mouse, keypad or remote control input). Color capabilities are said to be over 16-million hues. It can produce full motion full screen animation and has one megabyte of RAM.

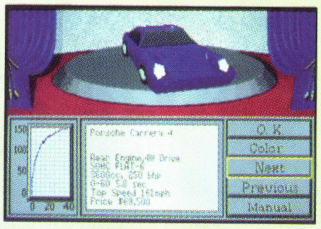
To support the entertainment console, American Interactive Media promises over 50 CD-I titles this year, with prices ranging from $20 to $60, in four categories: children, music, special interest and games. The games mentioned were *ABC Sports Golf: Palm Springs Open* (simulated play on the actual courses) and *Caesar's World of Gambling* (pick the game and place your bets).





Among the other titles promised before the end of the year are *Treasures of the Smithsonian* (tour the museums, study and interact with the exhibits), *Time-Life Photography* (study the ten-volume set of books, attend lectures and workshops, then practice taking pictures on-screen) and *Sandy's Circus Adventure* (create a twist-a-plot with the 30 story lines, original music and full-color animation).

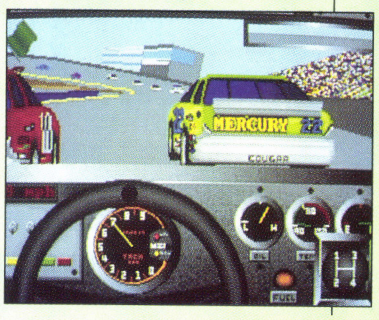
The new equipment should be on electronic retailers' shelves before Christmas, for approximately $1,400.



Electronic Arts Acquires Distinctive Software

Electronic Arts announced an agreement to acquire Distinctive Software, Inc., of Vancouver. The stock-cash transaction will leave the 77-person development company operating as an owned subsidiary. Tarrnie Williams will continue as president and CEO, and Don Mattrick, founder and chairman, will become vice-president of strategic planning for Electronic Arts.

DSI has created over 40 games, including *Test Drive*, *Hardball* (both for Accolade), *Bill Elliot's NASCAR Challenge*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *The Simpsons* (all for Konami), *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* (EA) and *Stunts* (Brøderbund).



Trip Hawkins, chairman of Electronic Arts, had this to say about the acquisition: "As our marketplace moves to 16-bit games and eventually on to CD-based optical media formats, the winning companies will be those with the best and the most product development capacity. I am convinced that DSI is the best independent-development company in the world, and we're looking forward to combining the two very creative and successful organizations of DSI and Electronic Arts."

Beverly Hills Hosts Multimedia Expo

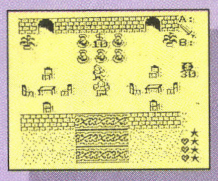
The Beverly Hills Hilton was the site of the Home Media Expo, a conference that covered what it termed "the start of a new home-entertainment industry." Over 1 500 attendees went to seminars, demonstrations and workshops, saw presentations of new technologies and discussed their applications to home-electronic entertainments.

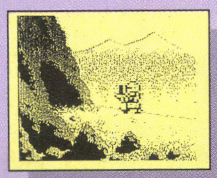
The subjects most discussed were interactive CD—call interactive, CDTV and the ways super-technologies will deliver entertainment, education, news and utilities to the home user. The professionals in the audience witnessed special presentations from Apple, Philips/PolyGram, Voyager, Electronic Arts, Commodore, AT&T/American Express, ABC News Interactive, NEC, Sega, Warner New Media and others.

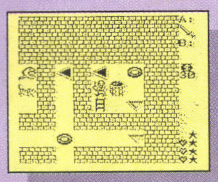
The Home Media Expo will return to Beverly Hills, California,

Ultima® Runes of Virtue™

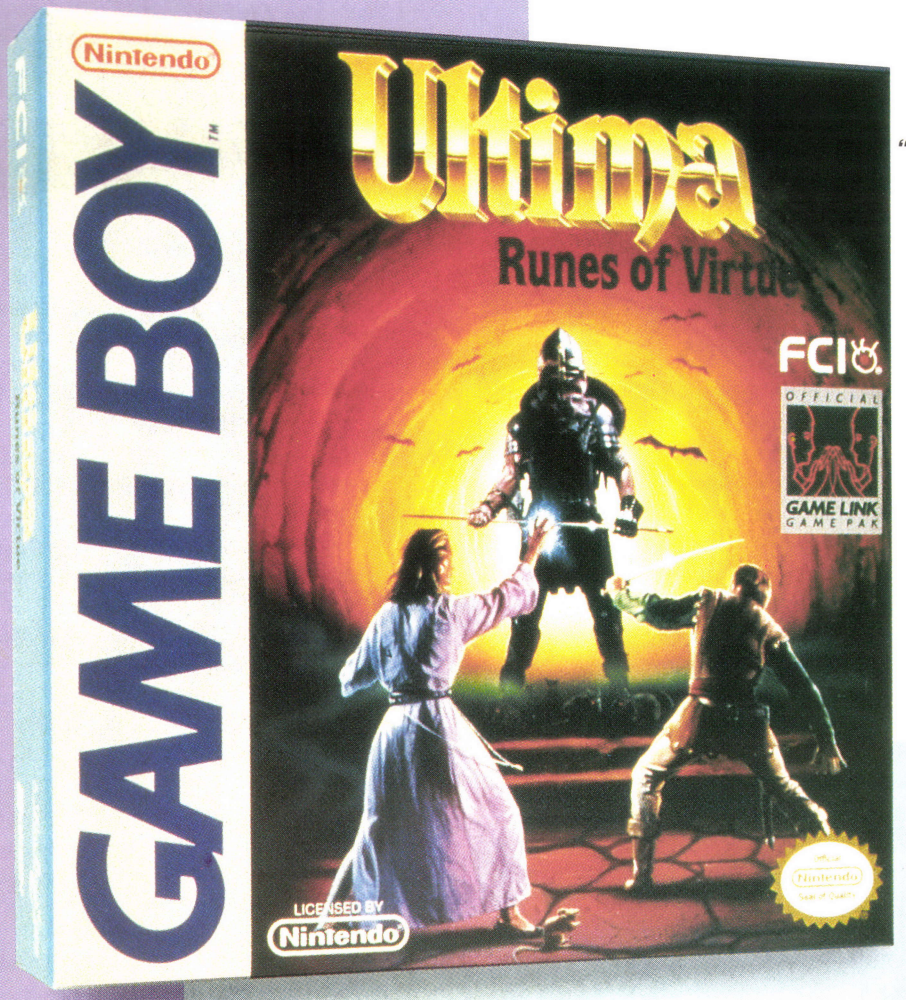
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The exciting world of Ultima games comes to Game Boy for 1 or 2 players. Now get the adventure of Ultima in an all new portable game! The villainous Black Knight has stolen the eight runes of virtue! It's your quest to get them back. Guide your character on a heroic quest through the lands and dungeons of Britannia. Who will you choose to be: Mariah the Mage, Iolo the Bard, Dupre the Fighter or Shamino the Ranger? Explore the dungeons, discover magic weapons and potions, and battle an overwhelming variety of monsters: bats, rats, jaggers, gremlins and wizards.

Ultima Runes of Virtue is a completely new game designed exclusively for Game Boy by the original Ultima designers.You'll enjoy the same hours of challenge and adventure that you've come to expect from an Ultima game.

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for a conference beginning March 31, 1992. For more information, contact American Expositions, Inc., at (212) 226-4141.

SPA Wins Largest Ever Piracy Settlement

Piracy really doesn't pay! The Software Publishers Association and Parametrix, Inc. (Seattle) announced settlement of a piracy lawsuit for $350,000 plus attorney's fees. The SPA Copyright Protection Fund brought suit after receiving a tip on the SPA antipiracy hotline that unauthorized copies of software were in use. A surprise raid was conducted by the SPA and U.S. marshals on February 26, 1991.

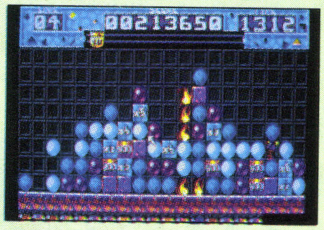
SPA Executive Director Ken Wasch explained that the company had "simply lost sight of its personal-computer management." Parametrix has quit using any copied software and instituted procedures to ensure no future unauthorized use of software will occur.

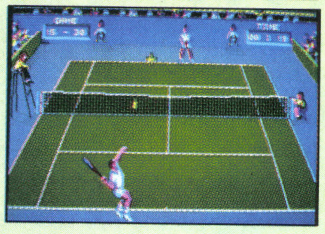
Wasch cautioned businesses about their responsibilities. "As companies grow, they need to educate their employees and conduct periodic audits of their PCs." He went on to say that the SPA will continue to "aggressively pursue" any and all infringement of copyrighted software.

Paris Comes to Sausalito

It's the very, very far Left Bank, since UBI Soft opened its United States office in Sausalito, California. The Parisian company's American branch on the West Coast will handle all details of UBI Soft's American business, including marketing, advertising and public relations. Christine Quemard,







general manager, explained, "We chose this area because of the resources available here and its proximity to many of our fellow publishers, as well as to our distributor, Electronic Arts. In California, we're in the U.S., midway between Europe and Japan, and have access to three major markets."

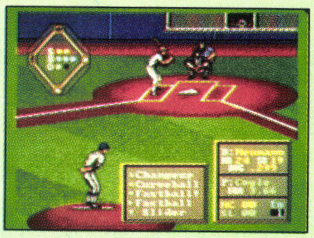
UBI Soft games now in the U.S. include *BAT, Pro Tennis Tour, Pick'n Pile, Unreal, Night Hunter, Iron Lord* and *Puffy's Saga. Battle Isle* and *Star Wars* for the Game Boy will be available later this year.

More Baseball Heads for 16-Bit Machines

Several companies will introduce 16-bit variants of America's favorite sport this autumn for play on the new video-game systems.

Jaleco's *Bases Loaded* games will acquire new





depth when *Super Bases Loaded* is introduced in October for play on the Super NES. Like *Ryne Sandberg Plays: Bases Loaded 3* (for play on NES), it rates the gamer in 13 skills (such as stolen bases, strikeouts, pick-off plays). It introduces five skill levels and an edit feature to customize team stats. Also, it features the center field perspective and a radar display that shows the runner's and fielder's positions in relation to the ball. *Super Bases Loaded* adds sound effects and voice reproduction.

Earl Weaver Baseball (Electronic Arts) is set to conquer yet another game system when it hits the market this autumn for play on the Sega Genesis. It features fully animated pitchers' windups, batters' swings, instant replay, plus slow motion and freeze-frame effects. A battery backup lets players save the game in progress and also retains team standings, statistics and the player's performance records.

Earl Weaver Baseball lets the gamer play, manage or both, and the action game can be played with or without stats. There are four skill levels and options for managing a team, playing head-to-head against another human or challenging Earl Weaver.

Hardball, said to be the best-selling electronic baseball game of all-time, with over 500,000 copies sold, is available now for the Genesis under Accolade's Ballistic line. It uses a behind-the-pitcher perspective that's especially attractive and features 26 teams, digitized sound and a practice area so the player can get ready for the arcade-style action.

The gamer can compete for a World Series Championship in a best-of-seven showdown, with Umpire Eddie Montague calling the plays. It saves the series by password and features one player against a computerized foe or two-player competitions.

London Computer Show Prepares for Record Crowds

The 1991 European Computer Entertainment Show, scheduled for September 5 through the 8th, at London's Earls Court II, will feature one of the world's largest collection of entertainment software. Virtually every United Kingdom and European software manufacturer will be represented, and the convention will also host many visitors from Japan and the United States. Last year's show drew over 30,000 attendees, but many were turned away at the door when the hall became overcrowded. This year the show rented a larger facility and should attract between 40,000 and 45,000 people.

The first day of the four-day event is for the trade only, but the balance of the convention is open to the public. They'll be able to meet the pros, see and play software and even make on-the-spot purchases.

The convention features home-entertainment software and is sponsored by EMAP Images (European publishers of *Computer & Video Games* and *Mean Machines*).

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CIRCLE #112 ON READER SERVICE CARD.



Armchair Architect Meets Jack Nicklaus

Michael Currao (age 26, of Parsippany, New Jersey), winner of the Egghead Discount Software/Accolade "Jack Nicklaus Armchair Architect Contest," travelled to the Memorial Tournament at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio. He and his guest attended practice rounds, watched the tournament and received a personal tour of the ABC production facility to see how the television coverage of the tournament was put together. The highlight of the week was when Currao met and spent time with Jack Nicklaus, who had personally selected the grand-prize entry to the contest.

Entrants in the contest used Accolade's *Jack Nicklaus' Unlimited Golf & Course Design* program to design the best par four hole. The results were judged on originality, aesthetics and playability.

Book Company Targets PC Gamers

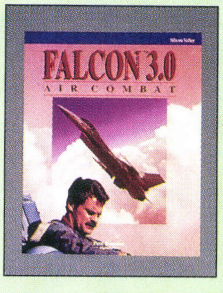
Osborne/McGraw-Hill has several books in the fall lists of special interest to gamers.

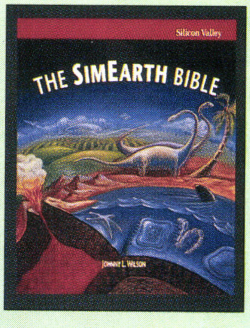
Titles for this Christmas include Johnny Wilson's *The SimEarth Bible* ($14.95, 224 pages), a guide to the Maxis program that includes insights and examinations of new scenarios. Pete Bonanni, who wrote the guide for *Falcon,* is now penning *Falcon 3.0 Air Combat.* Like the first book, this one will provide the computer pilot with a complete guide for Spectrum HoloByte's new release, expected on the stands by Christmas.

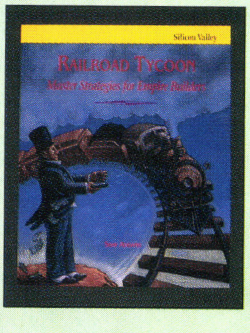
Already on the stands (great stocking stuffers) are Peter Spear's *The King's Quest Companion, The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook* (by Johnny Wilson), Shay Addams' *Railroad Tycoon* and Bonanni's *F-19 Stealth Air Combat* (each $14.95).

Covox Giveaway Features Software, Hardware

Covox is throwing in something extra for purchasers of the Sound Master II audio card for PCs. Until October 1, the company is adding a bonus package including a microphone/headset and voice-recognition software capable of recognizing up to 64 spoken commands and responding to the user's voice. This bonus, valued at $150, is included with any Sound Master II purchased directly from Covox.







The Sound Master II works with IBM PC compatibles XT, AT, 386 or 486 based computers and plays all digital sound formats. It's compatible with Ad Lib supported software and also programs with text-to-Speech and CVSD coding. It has an FM sound synthesizer, MIDI interface, two hi-fi speakers, music software for composing and playback, sound sampling/recording software and other libraries and utilities, for $229.95. It requires no technical knowledge to install or use.

To get the summer bonus, contact Covox directly.
Covox, Inc.
675 Conger St.
Eugene, OR 97402
(503) 342-1271

Top Coin-Ops of June 1991

Figures courtesy of *RePlay* magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Final Lap 2* by Namco
2. *Race Drivin'* by Atari
3. *The Simpsons* by Konami
4. *Space Gun* by Taito
5. *Rad Mobile* by Sega
6. *Indy Heat* by Leland
7. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
8. *Desert Assault* by Data East
9. *Galaxy Force* by Sega
10. *Rampart* by Atari

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *Street Fighter II* by Capcom
2. *Clutch Hitter* by Sega
3. *King of the Monsters* by SNK
4. *Sengoku* by SNK
5. *Gun Force* by Irem
6. *Raiden* by Fabtek
7. *Gals Panic* by Kaneko
8. *Final Fight* by Capcom
9. *High Impact* by Williams
10. *Blood Bros.* by Fabtek

Best New Videos

1. *Steel Gunner* by Namco
2. *F-15* by MicroProse
3. *Laser Ghost* by Sega

Top 10 IBM PC Video Games for May 1991

The Software Publishers Association released their hit list for May, showing the top IBM PC computer games and video games, based on analysis of sales by leading retailers Babbages, Comp-USA, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique.

Sierra's *King's Quest V* slid into the number-one spot on the computer list, and a Game Boy title dominated the video-game list. Meanwhile, Nintendo's *Super Mario Land* bounced into first.

Top 10 IBM PC Games for May 1991

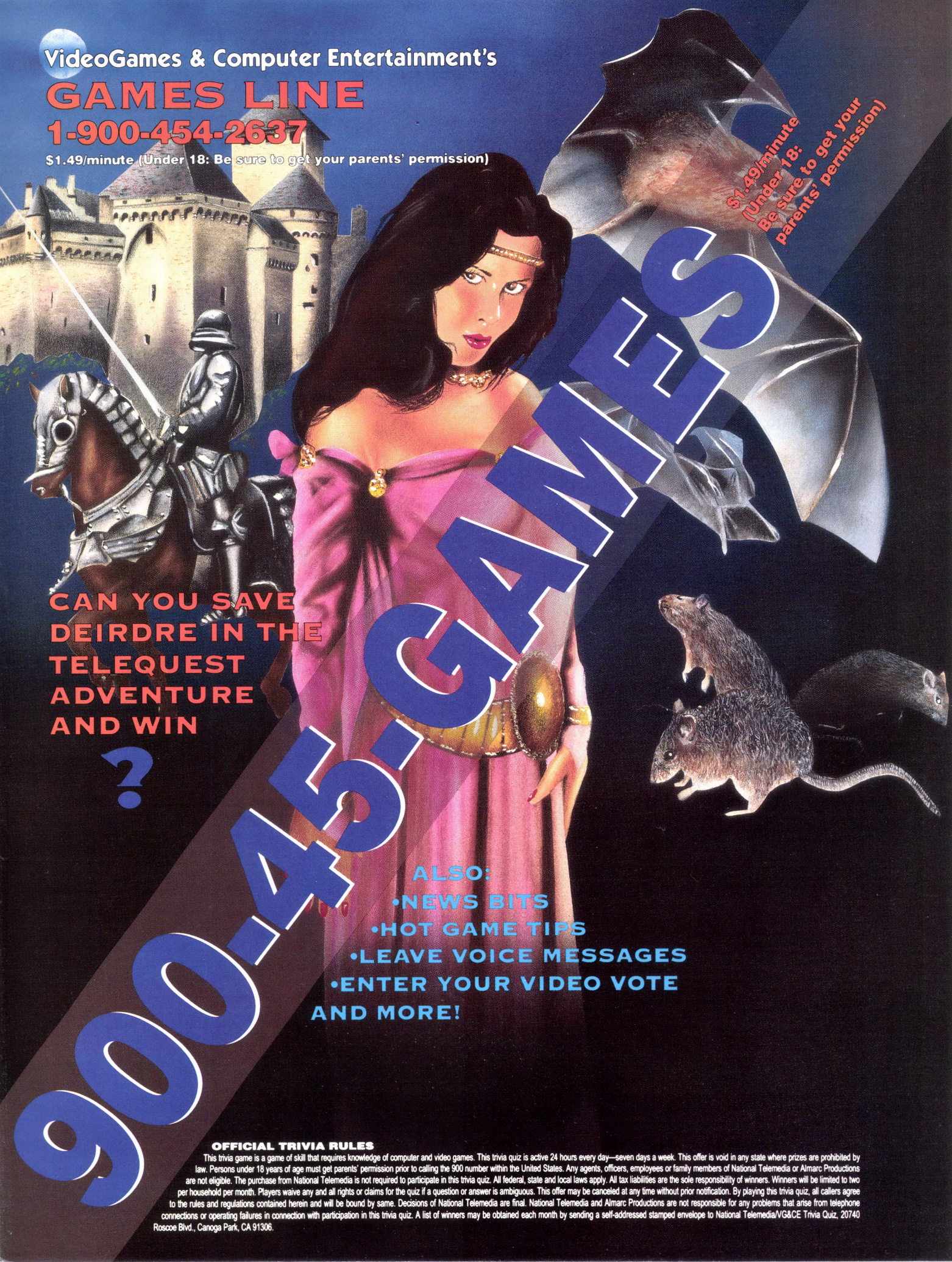
This Mo.	Last Mo.	Title	Publisher
1	2	*King's Quest V*	Sierra On-Line
2	*	*Jetfighter II*	Velocity
3	1	*Eye of the Beholder*	SSI
4	3	*Space Quest IV*	Sierra On-Line
5	4	*Wing Commander*	Origin
6	9	*A-10 Tank Killer*	Dynamix
7	7	*SimCity*	Maxis
8	5	*SimEarth*	Maxis
9	17	*Links-Firestone C.C. South Course*	Access
10	24	*Flight Simulat.Aircraft & Scenery*	Microsoft

* First month in the Top 10.

Top 10 Video Games for May 1991

This Mo.	Last Mo.	Title	Publ./System
1	4	*Super Mario Land*	Nintendo/GB
2	*	*WWF Superstars*	LJN/GB
3	6	*Lakers vs. Celtics*	EA/Genesis
4	1	*T.M.N.T.*	Konami/NES
5	*	*Warbirds*	Atari/Lynx
6	3	*Super Mario Bros. 3*	Nintendo/NES
7	9	*Tetris*	Nintendo/NES
8	8	*NBA All Star Challenge*	LJN/GB
9	*	*Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge*	Konami/NES
10	*	*Tecmo Bowl*	Tecmo/NES

* First month in the Top 10.



OFFICIAL TRIVIA RULES

This trivia game is a game of skill that requires knowledge of computer and video games. This trivia quiz is active 24 hours every day—seven days a week. This offer is void in any state where prizes are prohibited by law. Persons under 18 years of age must get parents' permission prior to calling the 900 number within the United States. Any agents, officers, employees or family members of National Telemedia or Almarc Productions are not eligible. The purchase from National Telemedia is not required to participate in this trivia quiz. All federal, state and local laws apply. All tax liabilities are the sole responsibility of winners. Winners will be limited to two per household per month. Players waive any and all rights or claims for the quiz if a question or answer is ambiguous. This offer may be canceled at any time without prior notification. By playing this trivia quiz, all callers agree to the rules and regulations contained herein and will be bound by same. Decisions of National Telemedia are final. National Telemedia and Almarc Productions are not responsible for any problems that arise from telephone connections or operating failures in connection with participation in this trivia quiz. A list of winners may be obtained each month by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to National Telemedia/VG&CE Trivia Quiz, 20740 Roscoe Blvd., Canoga Park, CA 91306.

Tips are graded on a scale of one to five joysticks. The more joysticks that are colored in, the more valuable the hint.

Blow the dust off those old games, and try out some of our new hints! If you have some great hints and tips for us, just put them on a piece of paper, and send them to VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, ATTN: Easter Egg Hunt. The author of each new tip we use will receive $10. Write neatly and be sure to include your name and address!

EASTER EGG HUNT

Here's a key to the abbreviations:

U = Up
D = Down
L = Left
R = Right
A = "A" button
B = "B" button
C = "C" button



Batman

SUNSOFT FOR THE GENESIS

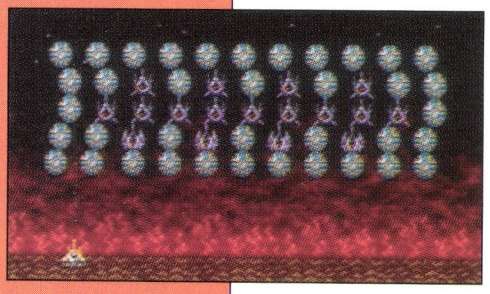
Daniel Compora of Monroe, Michigan, has found a way to get unlimited men for this game. In Level 3, at the far-right end of the museum's first level is a 1-Up; grab it and jump on to the rising platforms. When you reach the third platform or until the screen starts to scroll up, jump back down and the 1-Up should be there again. Thanks, Daniel.

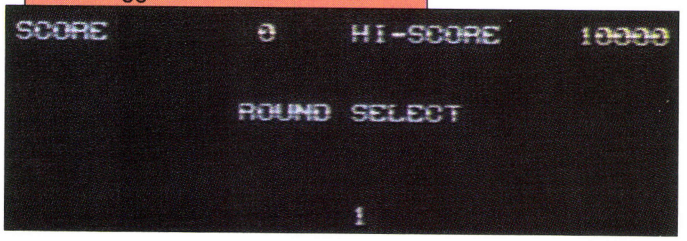
Space Invaders '91

TAITO FOR THE GENESIS

Brian Moyles of Chicago, Illinois, has found a way to access a level select. During the title screen, press and hold Buttons A and C, then press **START**. As the title screen fades, there should be a short pause before the first level appears. During this pause, press B, A, C. A level select should appear. Thanks, Brian, for sending in this great Easter egg.





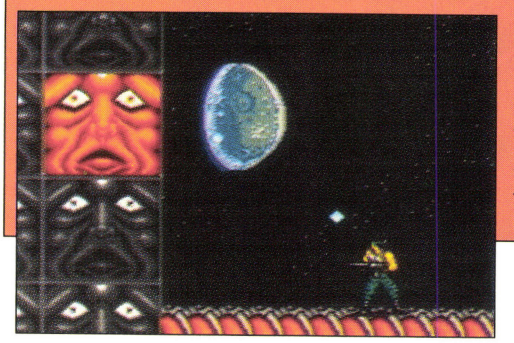


Midnight Resistance

SEGA FOR THE GENESIS

Here's how to skip stages in this game. Wait for the title screen to appear. Make sure it's the screen with "Press Start" highlighted in red. Now press and hold C and press **START**. After the game begins, you can press **START** to pause, then press A to advance to the next stage. This Easter egg was sent in by Cuong Cao of Westminster, California. Thanks, Cuong.





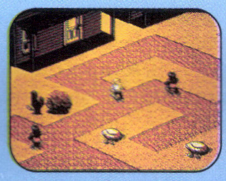
continued on page 28

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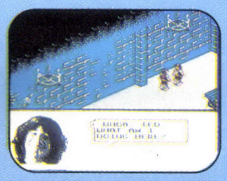
Bill & Ted's Excellent Video Game Adventure™ for your NES lets you power up to six different worlds searching for historical dudes lost in time. Most Heinous! Better send them back quickly or you'll miss the Wyld Stallyns concert...starring Bill and Ted.

Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy® Adventure™ sends our two most excellent compatriots, Bill and Ted, on a "Bogus Journey" against evil versions of themselves and the Grim Reaper as you race against the clock to collect stolen time fragments. Stellar!

Tough choice, dude. But you know what Bill and Ted would do: Choose both!



The locals give you clues to the whereabouts of famous historical dudes.



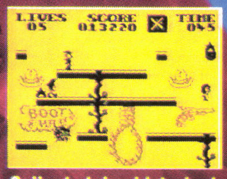
Party on with the Wyld Stallyns – if you complete your noble quest.



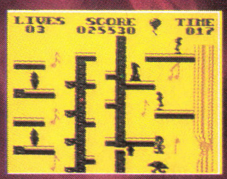
Say Ted, isn't that Ted? No way – yes way!



An evil plan to totally destroy your future? Bogus!



Collect stolen historical fragments, like bodacious Billy the Kid's Sheriff Star.



Run out of time and the most heinous Grim Reaper sends you to the land down under.

LICENSED BY Nintendo

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CIRCLE #113 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

continued from page 26

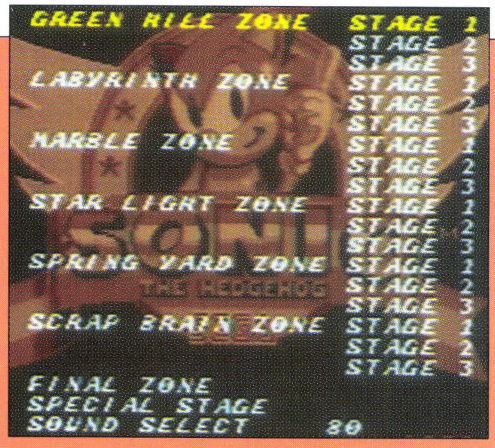
Sonic the Hedgehog

SEGA FOR THE GENESIS



As many of you know, there are many hidden rooms that contain rings and/or power-ups throughout *Sonic*. Here are just a few that we have learned so far, as well as some general tips (thanks to Mark Astrarita for most of these):

- Remember that there are a lot of hidden items stashed high in the trees, such as the spring (shown in the photo), which allows you to get rings that would normally be unattainable.
- Always be on the lookout for hidden rooms because they are not always obvious to locate, such as those in Act 1. Hidden rooms there can be spotted by the rough texture along the cliffs or walls. To break away the loose "mortar," you'll need to do the Super Sonic Spin (while moving, push down).



Green Hill Zone

1-1: On the very first platform with the monitor containing a super ring, jump into the tree that is immediately to the right. This tree has a spring that will put you higher in the air to get more rings.

1-2: Do the Sonic Spin left of the power sneaker where the wall texture differs. Once you break through, you'll find two super rings and a shield.

1-2: From the power sneaker, if you continue to the left on the lower path, you will eventually come across a red spring that will shoot you straight up (this is past the two springs that will send you back to the left). Now jump on the spring, and as you go up, move to the left just slightly. This will allow you to land on the top of the loop, where you can collect a lot of rings and a 1-Up.

1-3: At the end of the lower path, you'll also find another wall to break through. This act has a lot of hidden rooms, so be on the lookout.



Marble Zone

2-1: This act also has special rooms that aren't so hidden. You just have to spot the differences in the backgrounds, like this one just before you reach the underground palace.

2-1: If you get on top of different spiked weights and move to the left or right (depending on where the wall is), you can also find hidden rooms, like the one shown with four super rings and an extra Sonic.

2-2: Sometimes items aren't hidden; you just have to know which path to take. Some people might not think to jump up and to the right here to get a super ring and shield.

2-2: Some hidden rooms also turn out to be shortcuts, so look everywhere.

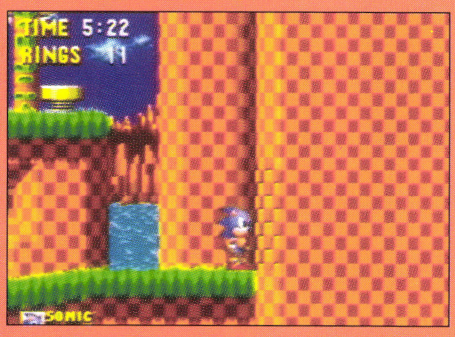
2-2: In the section with the large lava pit, where a stream will throw you into the air and where at the far left you have to jump up to continue, instead of jumping up, hold to the left. This will take you to a hidden room with two super rings and an extra Sonic.

You can also access a stage select if during the title screen you press U, D, L, R (if done right you should hear a chime), then hold A and press **START**. Thank Eric Smith for that tip.





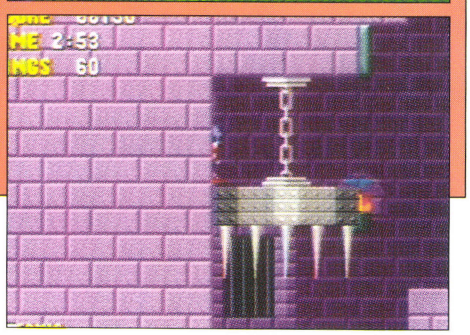












SEGA™ GENESIS™

RAIDEN TRAD™

8 MEGA-BIT MEMORY

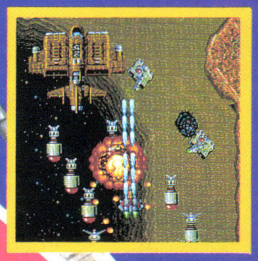
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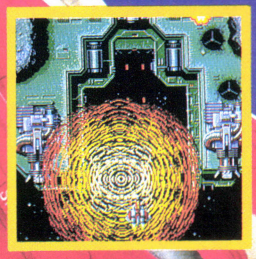
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HOCKEY

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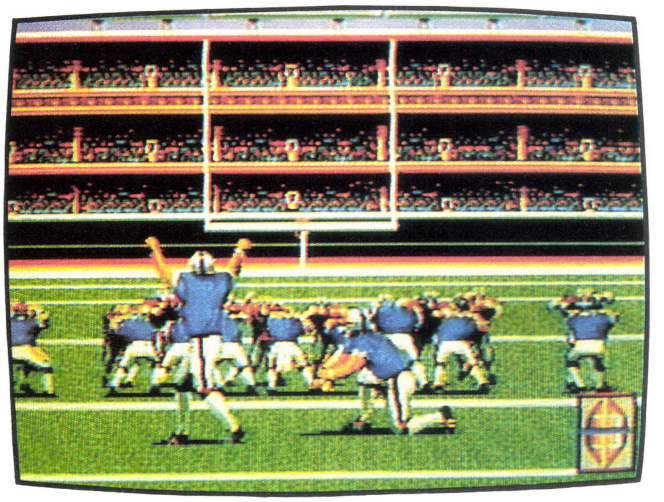
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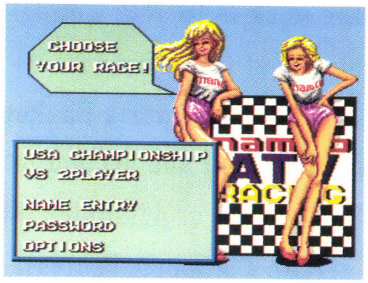
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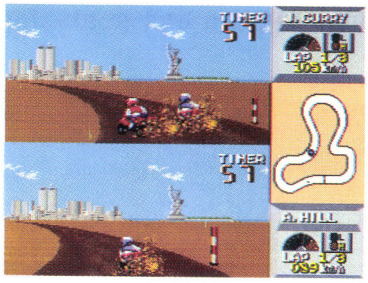
Available at: Toys R Us, Babbage's, Electronics Boutique, Montgomery Ward, Software Etc., McDuff Electronics, VideoConcepts, Sears Catalog, and other leading retailers.

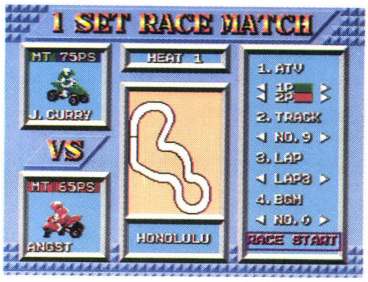
© 1991 NEC Technologies, Inc. For information on these games, call the TurboTeam at 1-900-FUN-TG16. The first 30 seconds are free, 99¢ per minute thereafter, maximum $5 per call. Get your parents' permission first.

SCRATCHING ATV BEASTS











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QUAD CHALLENGE powershifts you across America's greatest dirt tracks. Select one of four ATVs - each with its own combo of speed and handling. Then blast your way through 9 grueling tracks against a friend, or play the Circuit Championship - a 16 track password race to glory.

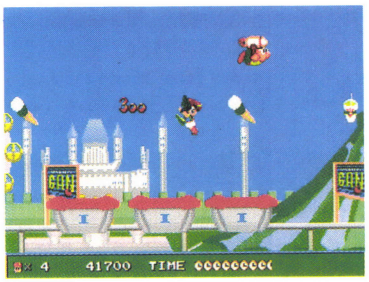
For more information write:
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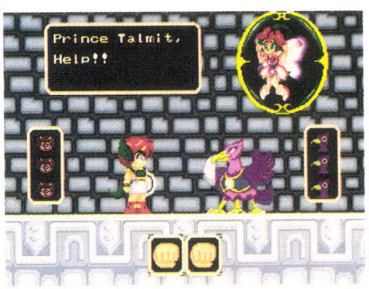
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CIRCLE #117 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

VIDEO GAME REVIEWS

Star Wars

JVC
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.99)

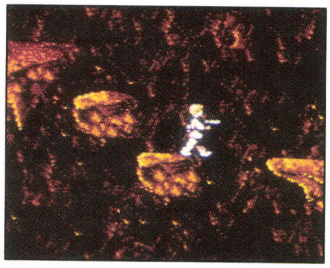
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

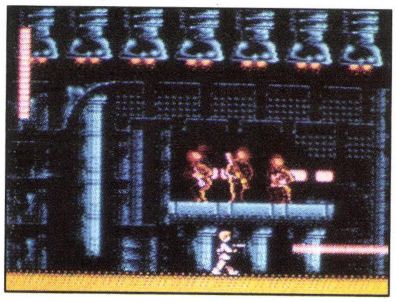
Your landspeeder races across the Tatooine Desert, dodging the ever-present, but essentially harmless, Banthas, the more dangerous laser batteries and the deadly homing droids. Who are you? Why, Luke Skywalker, of course, out on a thrill-seeking jaunt. At this point, you're blissfully unaware that the fate of the Empire may rest on your shoulders—or are you? Just about everybody knows the *Star Wars* saga, and now you've been placed in the leading role in this first NES version of the George Lucas classic.

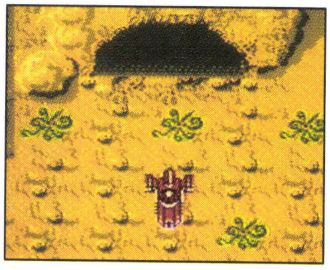
Most of this game is fairly standard, side-scrolling, run-jump-and-shoot fare. It's moderately challenging and becomes especially enjoyable when you discover some of your old "friends" like Obi-Wan Kenobi, Han Solo or Princess Leia. C-3PO is your companion from the start and is, as usual, full of helpful advice. R2-D2 also comes along to help you with the Death Star and to navigate your X-wing. Wait, we're getting ahead here.



Gamers must search caves, pilot the Millennium Falcon, and shoot down TIE fighters in the NES adaption of the Lucas classic.







The initial part of the game takes place on the Tatooine Desert, where Luke must explore a series of caves as well as the jawa's sandcrawler. He's armed with a fairly wimpy laser pistol, but before long he gets the lightsaber that once belonged to his Jedi father.

Exploring these initial caves is critical to your success, because this game gets very hard later on. Luke is a fragile sort of guy and can only take a few hits. Fortunately, there are orbs that recharge Luke's energy. Maybe even more important, there are ways to stockpile extra lives, if you can figure out some secrets.

Realizing that this was a real Darth Vader of a game, the designers gave you ten—that's right, ten!—continues. The game is full of challenging moments, and it helps to recognize the patterns of your enemies. Some can't be killed at all, but must be avoided. With practice all this is within the reach of any average game player.

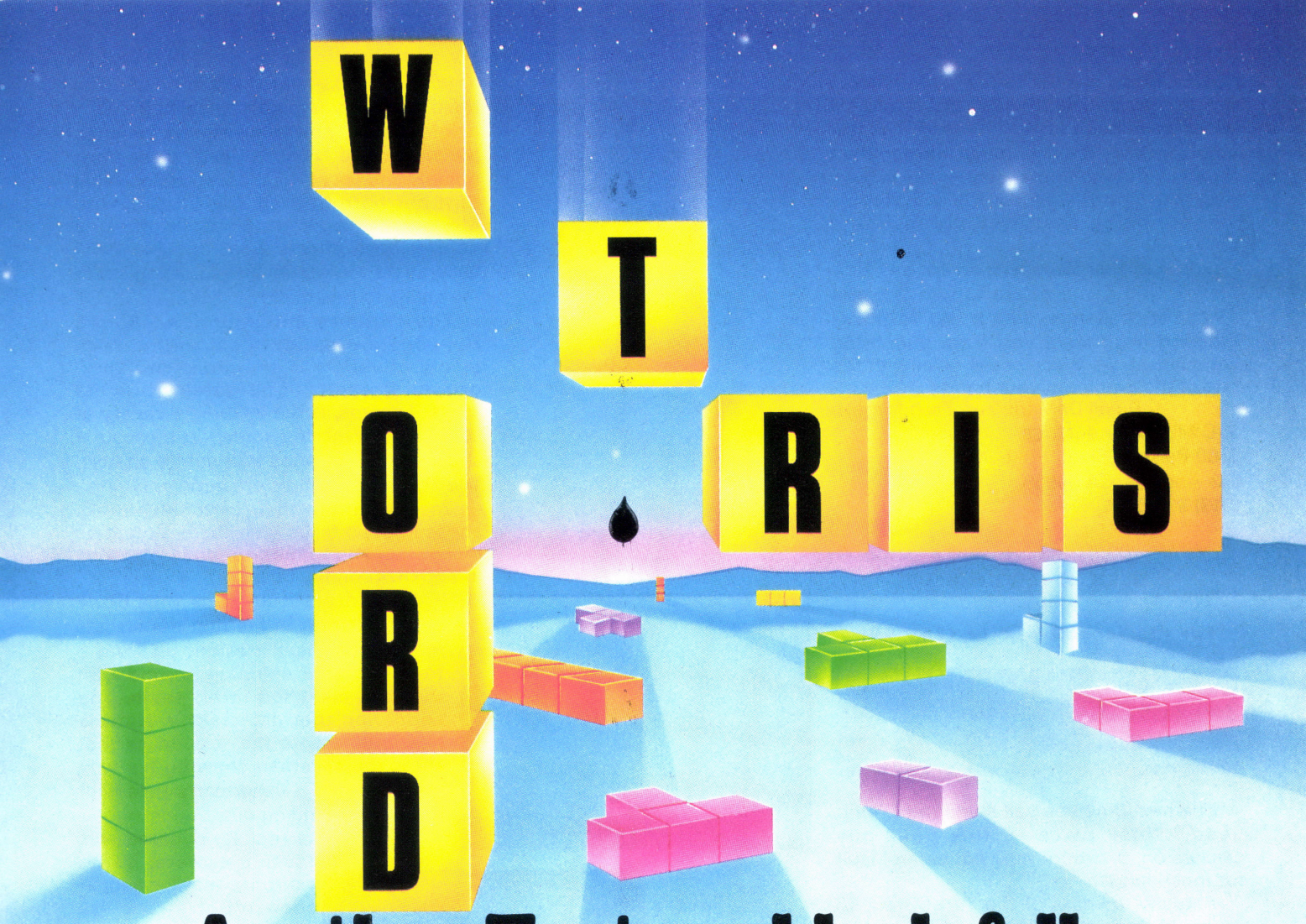
Hold on, that's not the end. The cave-exploration part of the game has a lot in common with other side-scrolling games. The graphics are pretty good throughout: on a par with most good NES games. I wouldn't rate them the absolute best, however. The "soundtrack" for the game is pretty good, particularly the familiar music from the bar scene, which has been properly squished down to cartridge size. Controlling Luke is fairly easy, but he does have a tendency to skid when he jumps or runs and stops. You must master the running jump because some of the gaps you'll face are wide, and the bottom is usually lined with deadly spikes.

As you pick up characters from the game, they join you. Part of the fun is that you can look or even talk to them in a subscreen. In fact, you can even switch to playing either Han or Leia, making one of them the active character. For the most part, however, Luke and his lightsaber are best to use.

The game gets more interesting toward the end. Not only do the side-scrolling levels get brutal, but there are several changes of pace. You'll find yourself piloting the Millennium Falcon through a nasty asteroid field at one point, and later you'll have to shoot down seemingly endless Imperial TIE fighters with your on-board lasers, both on the Falcon and in an X-wing fighter. These sequences require a whole new set of skills and are made to be quite difficult. (One hint: Stock up on shields when you can.)



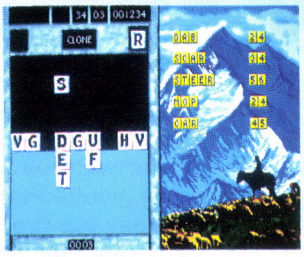
Anyway, if you complete the game, you gain the undying gratitude of the rebel forces. Your quest will take you into the Death Star itself (just as in the movie) and eventually down the narrow, tricky approach to the vent shaft where you can destroy Darth Vader's evil machine once and for all.



Another Eastern block falls.

There's a new 'TRIS on the block. Its name is WORDTRIS. And if you love TETRIS, this latest fast-action, falling block, Soviet game will boggle your mind.

This time the falling pieces are letter blocks. Form them into words and score points. As each block falls, it pushes down the blocks below, producing an ever-changing kaleidoscope of letters where scoring opportunities appear - and vanish - at the blink of an eye.



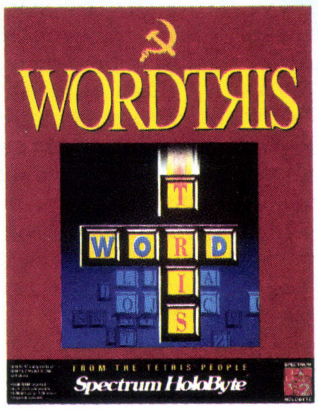
Go for XYLOPHONE if you dare.

Create words horizontally or vertically, but don't put all your E's in one BASKET. Because every time a word lines up, *poof!* those letters disappear, and the blocks below pop up to fill the spaces. So whenever you earn points you stir up the alphabet soup. And suddenly that falling M has no HOME to go to.

WORDTRIS keeps raining vowels and consonants until you've collected enough words to move to the next level, or the well fills up. Of course, each successive round ups the ante as the blocks fall ever faster. But you can choose your difficulty level to match your skills, and select from single player, cooperative, competitive, head-to-head or tournament modes. The built-in 30,000 word dictionary verifies even the most obscure word.

Set the difficulty level at 10 and you'll find WORDTRIS harder to keep up with than the changes in Eastern Europe.

WORDTRIS. Another great game from the TETRIS people.



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CIRCLE #118 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Like many games today, *Star Wars* is fun to play and fairly easy at first, but it becomes difficult toward the end. The last side-scrolling level is much harder than the first, and the fighter sequences require that you shoot down a lot of enemies without being destroyed yourself—no easy task!

For avid *Star Wars* fans, or for any NES player, this game offers lots of fun and plenty of challenge, with a few surprises blended in to keep you from becoming complacent. As if you could relax with the fate of the Empire in your hands.

—Rusel DeMaria and Zach Meston

JVC Musical Industries
3800 Barham Blvd., Suite 305
Los Angeles, CA 90068
(213) 878-0101

Bonk's Revenge

NEC

For the TurboGrafx-16 ($49.99)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

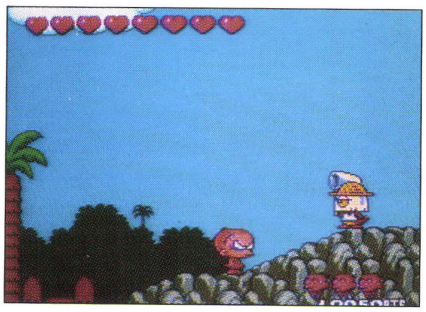
The next time you call someone a "butt head," think twice—if this Bonk guy catches on, that term may not be an insult for much longer.

Actually, owners of the TurboGrafx-16 probably know that NEC's premier prehistoric hero has already made a most favorable impression with his debut, *Bonk's Adventure*. The recent "free Bonk" promotion didn't hurt his reputation either. This Cro-Magnon Kojak surely sold a lot of systems, and that's one of the many reasons why he's back in this sequel.

Fans of the cartoon caveman will be pleased to learn that Bonk's new adventure is longer than the first, and it includes a lot more hidden surprises and bonus levels than any one game has a right to. Even Bonk's appearance has been improved—with bigger eyebrows and a smaller mouth, he's cuter than ever, and his movements consist of many more "frames" of animation than the first game used. You won't be able to spin the Bonkster in mid-leap as quickly as you could before, but there are plenty of areas where you'll do better if you move the TurboPad's auto-fire switches to the "off" position and take out your enemies with single-fire skull drops.

For the uninitiated (and before I go too far), Bonk is the Stone Age star of this run-and-jump "guy game," a caveman who settles scores with his enemies by "bonking" them with his own skull. I don't know how thick that noggin is, but it's as huge as it is hairless—on the screen, Bonk's head accounts for more than half of his height! Lots of power-ups can be found on the way to the "boss" of each level, most notably chunks of meat-covered bone that turn our hero into an angry brute with Medusa-like powers. Find another one before these effects wear off, and Bonk becomes a raging, invincible savage with the ability to breathe fire.

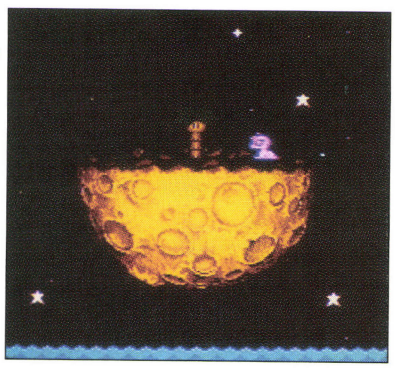
The graphics and sounds of *Bonk's Revenge* are suitably charming, with plenty of variety in the tunes and background graphics. The game's biggest asset, it seems, is the incredible variety of colors that wash the screen in a constant show of vibrant hues and subtle shades. The "boss" characters are large enough to be menacing, but their cartoonish looks and bug-eyed faces give them almost as much charisma as the bald dude who tries to bop them on the bean.

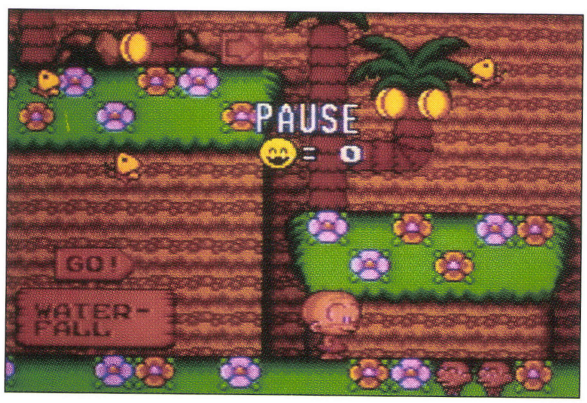


One interesting trick that Bonk didn't perform in his first outing lets him fling himself straight up from a tree limb after spinning around with the limb clenched in his teeth. The animation that depicts this stunt is hilarious, as are the sequences that show the caveman chewing his way up the line of a fisherman's pole with his tongue hanging out.

Because the first *Bonk* game was such a success, it's no surprise that the sequel doesn't stray too far from the original concept. That may be the game's biggest flaw: *Bonk* fans may not find enough here to justify the purchase of a game that, essentially, they already own.

Bonk's Revenge is slick and entertaining enough to guarantee hundreds of hours of happy head-butting.





But that's not to say that veteran Bonkers will be disappointed: if you liked *Bonk's Adventure*, you'll love his latest saga. And if you're not familiar with the little guy yet, you're in for a treat. It may not showcase the full capabilities of the TurboGrafx-16 or introduce any innovative ideas, but *Bonk's Revenge* is slick and entertaining enough to guarantee hundreds of hours of happy head-butting.

—Chris Bieniek

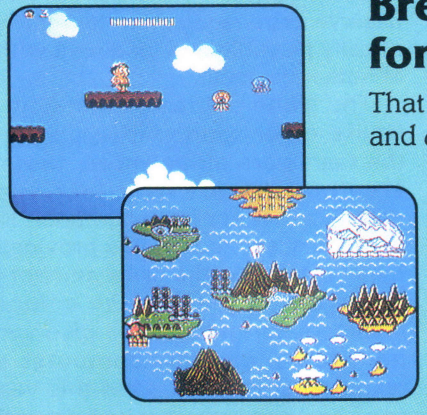
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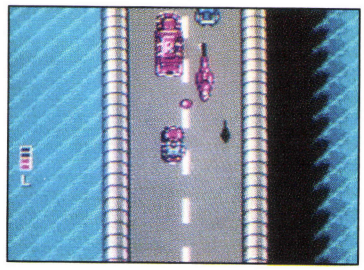
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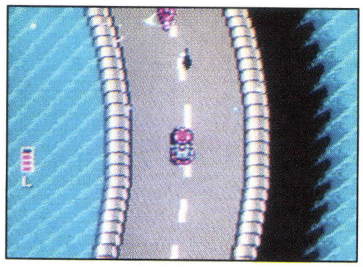
Super Spy Hunter

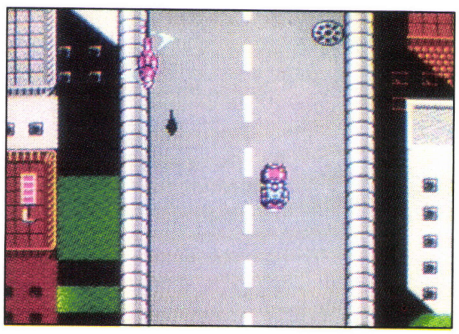
SUNSOFT

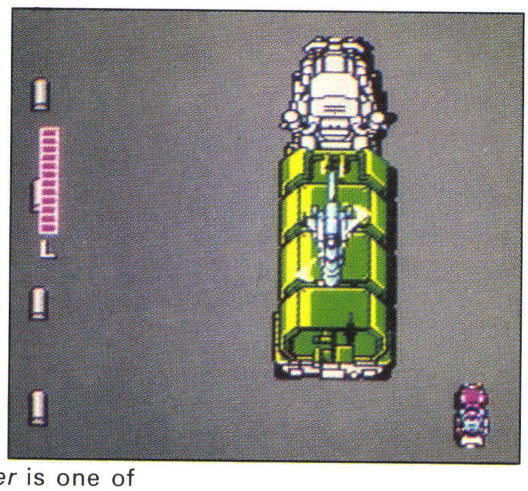
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($43.95)

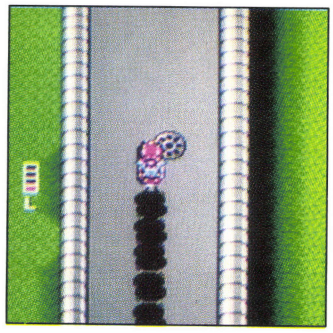
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10











This NES sequel packs a wallop to the original *Spy Hunter* but is as frustrating—or challenging, whichever applies to you—to play. Though derived somewhat from the arcade game *Spy Hunter II*, *Super Spy Hunter* stands on its own with further embellishments in game play.

Spy Hunter was simply a traditional overhead shooter set against a driving scenario (nontraditional for the genre and the inspiration for other games; for example, Atari Games' *Roadblasters*). Speeding through streets, you drove your sports car while blasting away enemy cars and helicopters with machine-gun fire and picking up power-ups to modify your mobile artillery.

Super Spy Hunter provides more of the same—and then some—as expected. The play setting changes from the usual streets to lakes and the sky the further your car races down the vertically scrolling stretch. Your car readily converts to a seafaring craft and airborne vehicle to suit these environs.

Enemies attack with a parade of cars, speedboats and aircraft. No vehicular expense is spared in their efforts to blow you away. And what a grandiose display your demise is. Your automobile explodes in a spectacular cataclysm that seems not just to taunt you for dying but for having to start the stage all over again. *Super Spy Hunter* is one of those shooters that insists upon you replaying from the beginning of your current level rather than from the point of your death. Oh, what frustrating joy!

Most of the action takes place on the streets. The bad guy cars attempt to kill you off by a variety of imaginative means. Cars will run you off the road, screw into you from behind with drills, bore into your car's sides with spiked wheel covers, etc. Helicopters and gun turrets add to this literally existentialist road trip. You respond by firing at them with variable-adjusting machine guns mounted on your car roof.

Power-ups are obtained by blowing away ugly-looking sedans displaying letters on their roofs. Some of these weapon additions include oil-slicking capability, spiked wheel covers, extended life energy and machine guns with the ability to do brief "search and destroy" attacks.

A preeminent feature of *Super Spy Hunter* is its simulated rotation scrolling. It's not true-degree rotation, but it does give a convincing illusion that the screen is turning as your car travels down curving roads. Other than this, the rest of the graphics are improved over *Spy Hunter*'s only to the level of today's minimal NES standards.

The exceptionally skillful player and those who have mastered *Spy Hunter* will get what they want and expect out of *Super Spy Hunter*. Video-game mortals might have a tough time and could find their patience running out of gas due to the game's insistent difficulty.

—Howard H. Wen

Sunsoft
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Cypress, CA 90630
(714) 891-4500

NHL Hockey

ELECTRONIC ARTS

For the Sega Genesis ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

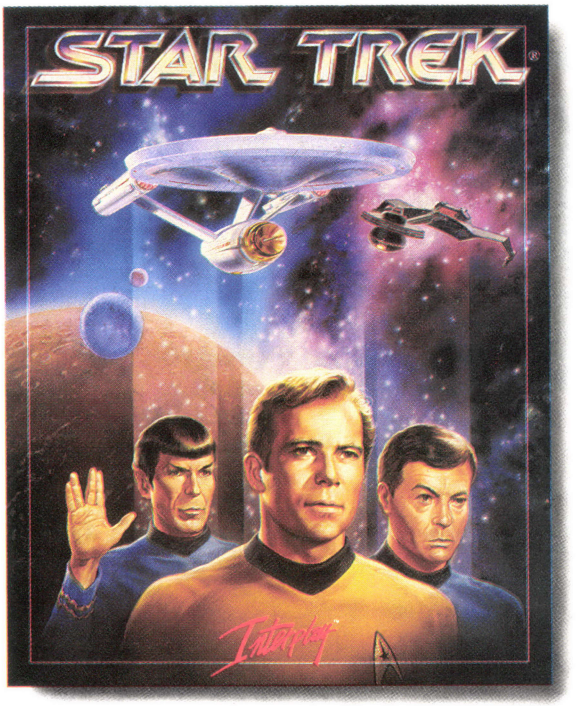
Thank goodness for video-game ice hockey. Without it, thousands of kids would have to play the real thing, resulting in countless broken bones, missing teeth and serious lacerations. Therefore, Electronic Arts has performed a national service by providing the first Genesis ice hockey game, *NHL Hockey*. And they deserve extra recognition for making it terrifically playable and loading it with plenty of authentic detail.

The game utilizes 24 real NHL teams. Unlike other sports video games where the teams are all balanced, these teams aren't. Some are excellent, most are decent, a few are just plain poor. Not only is this realistic, but it also provides a way to get more than the usual amount of challenge out of playing the computer (a mediocre performer). You give yourself a poor team, give the computer a great team—Boston looks good this year—and see if you can turn your luck around.

The lineup of modes includes one player, two players head-to-head and a particularly cool option where two human players play on the same team against the computer. In all modes you can stage a

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STAR TREK: The 25th Anniversary™

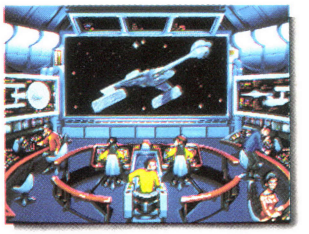


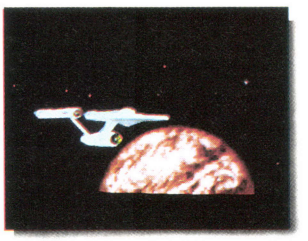
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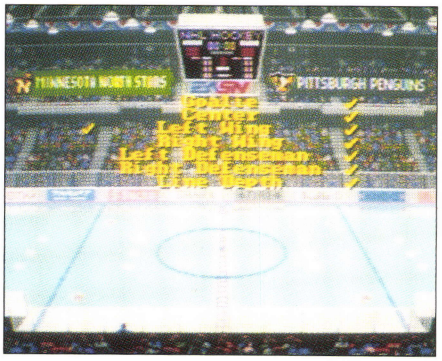
To order *STAR TREK: The 25th Anniversary*, call 1-800-969-GAME. Available on MS-DOS compatible machines for $59.95.

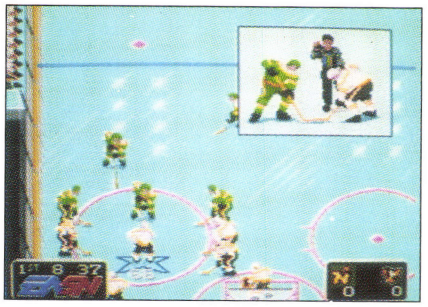
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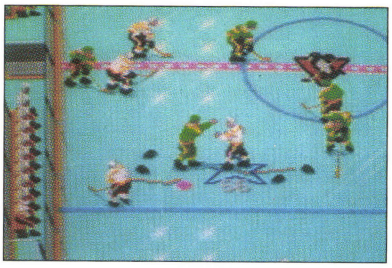
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Electronic Arts' *NHL Hockey* utilizes 24 real NHL teams and unlike other video-game sports titles, the teams aren't all balanced.

regular season game or the Cup playoffs. (You can save your status in the series with a password option.) You can also play a best-of-seven-game playoff series. Penalties and line changes can be toggled on and off, and period length is flexible, though the times aren't accurate; a ten-minute period goes by faster than ten real minutes.

Games begin with a report similar to the scouting report that precedes *John Madden Football* games, giving each team's strong suits. As mentioned, there's great variety to the overall strengths of the teams. Controlling your player takes getting used to, but once mastered, gives you a terrific feeling of gliding over the ice and building up momentum. The action is truly nonstop, much faster and more frenetic than *Madden* and very true to real ice hockey. Face-offs and ref calls are all presented in pop-up windows for extra detail. Instant replays can be called up so you can see the last few seconds of the most recent play.

Frankly, though, it's nice to be able to play with your favorite team; stats aren't a big part of this game. What makes *NHL* special are the details. Puck dynamics are excellent. It's slightly oversized, so you can keep track of it, and it tumbles and ricochets realistically, even flying over the wall on occasion. The players are as large as can be while still allowing a good view of the rink, and they display a wide range of animations: shooting, passing, sprawling, fighting, waving sticks in a victory salute and so on. Fights break out seemingly at random; not only can you control the fighting, but the fights you've won and lost are tallied on the stat screen. Flashbulbs go off frequently in the stands, and the camera pans smoothly to keep up with the game play.

The standout detail of the game is the sound. The puck makes a convincing thud when it hits a wall, the sticks clack on the ice, the players make perfect grunts and groans, the crowd responds at all the right times (rooting the home team and booing the visitors) and the sirens wail. Best of all is the end-of-period horn—it's absolutely authentic.

NHL Hockey suffers from one common complaint: a computer opponent that will be too easily bested. Two-player mode is, as in *Madden*, the way to go with this game. Aside from that caveat, this is as detailed and fast-moving a hockey game as has ever been packed into a cart.

—Josh Mandel

Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

Marvel Land

NAMCO

For the Sega Genesis ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10



Namco's *Marvel Land* is apparently designed for the novice video-game player.

Namco has brought out a kind of game that Genesis owners haven't been inundated with, unlike their unfortunate NES counterparts: the *Super Mario Bros.* clone. *Marvel Land* has all of the elements of the genre, wrapped under the usually odd yet cutesy theme.

There's the benevolent but dead king, King Coni. Before he passed away, he had an amusement park built on the mountain "Peace" for the people of his land to enjoy and gave it a superbly dull name, Marvel Land ("on I-90, south of 'Shireland,' kids!"). The park is divided into four sections: Flower Land, Prairie Land, Sweets Land and Ice Land. Naturally, every section is under the guardianship of a fairy, and these fairies all answer to Princess Wondra.



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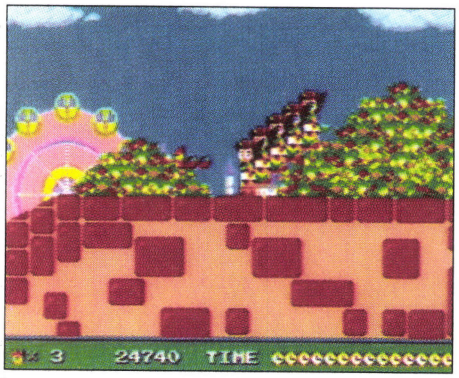
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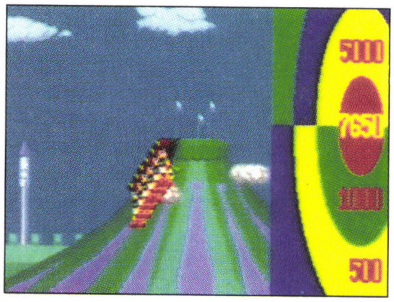
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After the old good king kicks it, the bad guy takes over the throne, King Mole. The rodent-faced Mole imprisons the fairies in crystal balls to control their powers and captures Princess Wondra. Not much of a sensible explanation is given as to why he does this, other than that King Mole is described as a "rat face" and "power hungry." Perhaps he inflated the price of admission to Marvel Land to an outrageous level.

As Prince Talmit, the only heir to the Coni throne, your mission is to go through Marvel Land to rescue the fairies and Princess Wondra and defeat King Mole so as to put an end to his unreasonable ticket price hikes (or whatever). If you can imagine Disneyland park employees dressed in their cephalically enlarged costumes chasing you with a murderous bent as you dash from Space Mountain to Frontier Land, then you pretty much have the general idea behind *Marvel Land*.

Every level of a section of the park has its usual army of bizarre characters guarding it. Prince Talmit can defeat many of these minions by jumping on them or whipping them with his "spirit tail" (a weapon obtained from a certain power-up). There is also a power-up that will give Talmit wings to fly to those harder-to-reach areas of Marvel Land. Warp doors function as shortcuts or hindrances to his advance.

Upon completing seven levels of a park section, you face a boss and have a duel. If you win, the fairy is freed—if not, you get thrown back to the start of the previous level. These aren't your typical arcade beat-'em-up-senseless contests. You challenge the first boss to a game of rock, paper, scissors. At the end of the second, third and fourth sections, you and your opponent pump balloons, play concentration and see who can whack the other first in a game of "musical holes," respectively.

After you beat a boss, it's time for the "Namco Light Parade." You race Prince Talmit through a cavalcade of lighted floats depicting Namco video-game characters and try to catch as many falling stars as you can before the parade ends.

Marvel Land is an easier-than-usual Genesis game to play, apparently designed for the novice player. As I mentioned, this title fulfills a lack in the current Genesis library. It's not recommended for Genesis aficionados (the game screen graphics are way below 16-bit par), but *Marvel Land* should be a nice addition to those accustomed more to NES material than the typical Genesis fare.

—H. H. W.

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CIRCLE #124 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Trog

ACCLAIM
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Trog is closely based upon a little-known arcade coin-op of the same name. Capitalizing a bit late on the long-passed dinosaur trend, *Trog* is a traditional dot-gobbler set against a cartoony prehistoric theme.

As the Prince of Thieves you'll:

- Explore the treacherous Sherwood Forest when you travel back in time to strange and eerie Medieval Britain.
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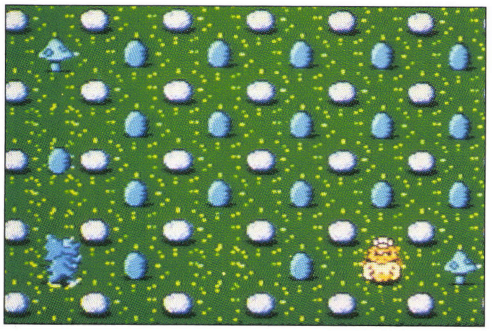
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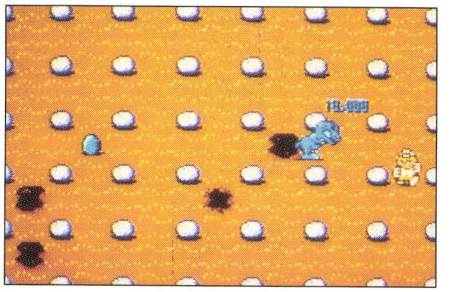
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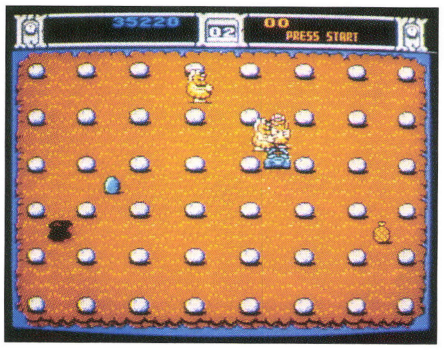
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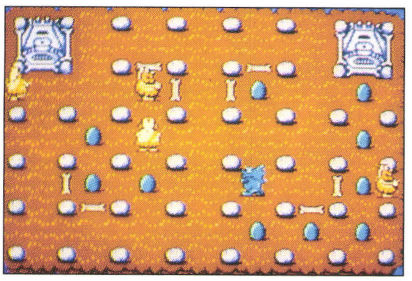








Acclaim's *Trog* is based upon the arcade coin-op of the same name.



Like Bub and Bob of *Bubble Bobble* fame, *Trog* features a pair of cute dinosaurs, Bloop and Spike. The two race through mazes to devour eggs. Two people can play at the same time: Bloop—the blue dinosaur—must eat the blue eggs while orange-skinned Spike can only take the orange-colored ones. Whoever can eat all of his/her eggs and race to the dino's appropriately colored exit first wins bonus points for completing the screen. Being alone isn't a problem as you can play either Bloop or Spike by themselves.

The dinosaurs' enemies are one-eyed cavemen called Trogs, who have an appetite for little dinos like Bloop and Spike. Once a Trog manages to club Bloop or Spike unconscious, he carves it up with utensils, devours him eagerly and burps once the meal is finished. Bloop and Spike don't have to take this treatment passively. They can faze the Trogs with a punch or sock them hard enough so that the cavemen fly off the screen.

There are helpful items to eat. Ice cubes freeze Trogs in place. Red flowers cause Bloop and Spike to run faster. Horseshoes protect from attacks. Hot tamales enable Bloop and Spike to spit fireballs. Pineapples transform them into tyrannosaurs that can eat up the Trogs. Mushrooms don't help; they cause the dinosaurs to move slower. Running into campfires or tar pits is also not advised, since it results in the loss of a life.

On later levels, the Trogs have the ability to leap across the screen on their springing shoes. A catapult might be available for Bloop and Spike to hop onto in order for them to be thrown about in the same manner. Sometimes a warp chamber will appear and if the dinosaurs enter, it will take them to a higher level.

Bonus waves appear after finishing three maze screens. One has Bloop and Spike competing to see who can gather the most diamonds before the timer runs out. The other two waves have the dinosaurs burning Trogs with fireballs or eating them.

As a one-player contest, *Trog* becomes tiring pretty fast. Two players bring in a more challenging element by stressing head-to-head competition. This is a benign game that's simple enough for the real young set—the likely audience for *Trog*.

—H. H. W.

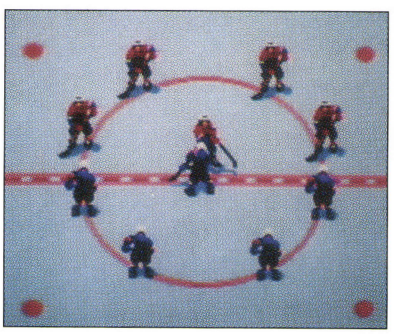
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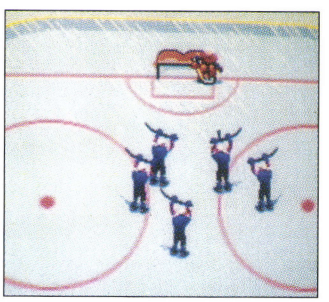
TV Sports: Hockey

NEC

For the TurboGrafx-16 ($51.99)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10





"*TV Sports: Basketball* is really good," a game counselor at NEC told me recently, "but wait till you see the hockey game." I could tell by the tone of his voice that *TV Sports: Hockey* was going to be something special, and now I know he wasn't kidding.

Hockey fans are sure to enjoy the way this TurboChip duplicates many of the game's most exciting elements. You get a closeup view of face-offs and breakaway shots, cement heads who plow into the corners and knock opposing players on their rear ends, finesse players who bombard the net with rubber on a regular

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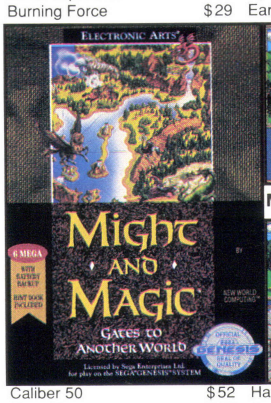
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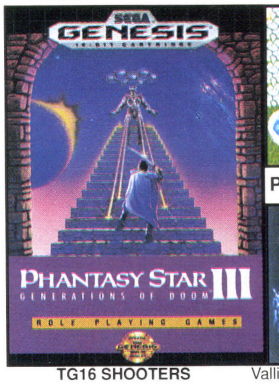
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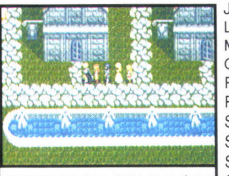
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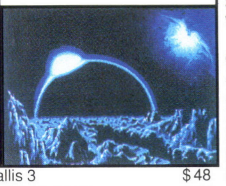


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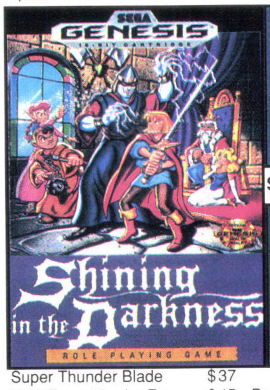
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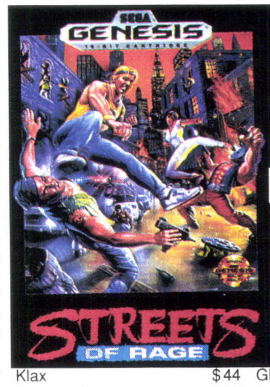
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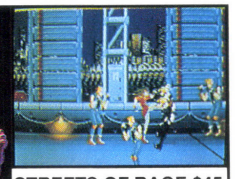
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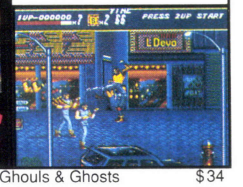
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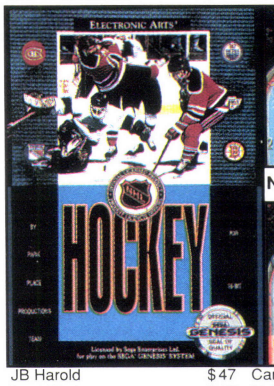


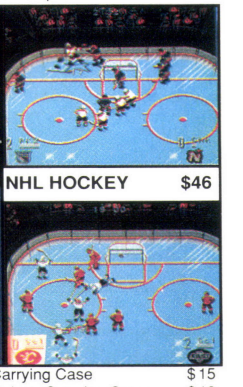


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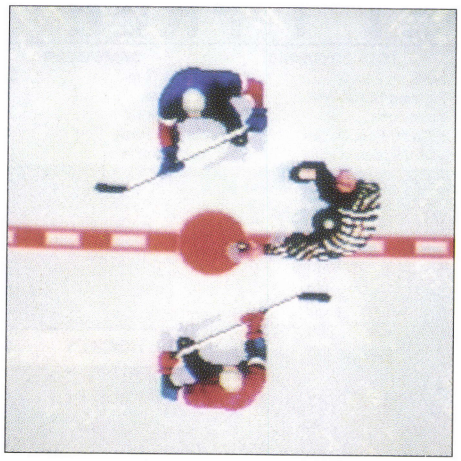


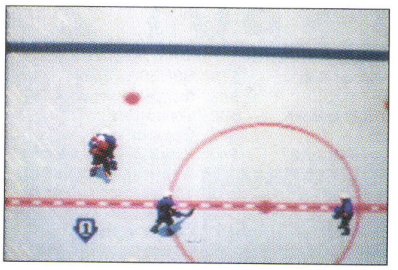
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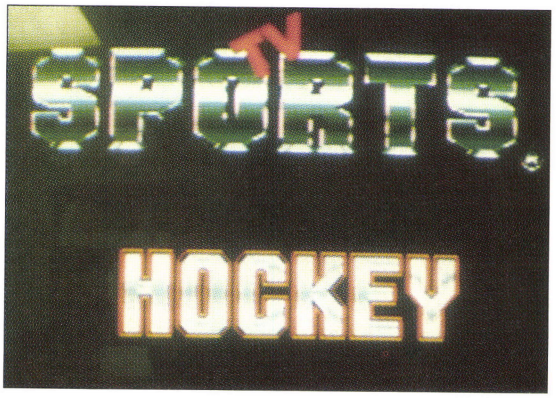
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TV Sports: Hockey contains graphically strong sequences of the fighting that occurs between players on the ice.



basis, a detailed rink with clearly drawn benches and penalty boxes and also an enthusiastic crowd that cheers at every goal and jeers at every penalty. Teams are identified by country in an international league of ten clubs, and the game also includes player-substitution options and various control configurations.

And, of course, there's plenty of fighting. Every so often (and sometimes for no apparent reason), a pair of players will drop their sticks, fling their gloves to the ice and go at it. The game then switches to a larger side view of the combatants, where you can get a good look at the flying blood and spittle (yech!). One unique variation of this concept allows for occasional fisticuffs away from the puck, where neither of the two players are under your control.

If you're familiar with the other titles in the *TV Sports* series, you're probably expecting to hear that the five-player mode is great fun and it sure is. To be honest, it's hard to imagine how a game that allows five people to participate at the same time could fail to meet that simple criterion. Compared to the color-coding of players in *TV Sports: Basketball*, the numbering system used by the hockey game is much clearer—it's easy to identify which of the players is under your control.

Less-skilled gamers can choose the "easy rules" option, which simplifies the game by eliminating offsides and icing calls. This way, you can play dump-and-chase without first advancing the puck past center ice—just chuck it over toward your opponent's goal, and send your grinders in after it. You can't use this tactic too often against a computer team though. The computer-controlled players skate brilliantly, and if you don't direct a pass to a specific teammate, you'll soon see the biscuit being stickhandled in the other direction by a guy with the wrong jersey color.

Since *TV Sports: Hockey* makes a favorable impression by flaunting a healthy amount of realistic detail, it's no surprise that the game's biggest flaws are the areas where that degree of realism is sacrificed. Interestingly, most of these quirks result from the game's conformity to the commonly recognized conventions of hockey video games like Konami's *Blades of Steel* and Nintendo's own *Ice Hockey*, both for the NES. Someday soon there will be a hockey video game that doesn't have fights breaking out twice per period (with the loser alone sent to the "sin bin") and doesn't have teams who celebrate each goal by crowding in front of the humiliated goalie and performing a stick-raising war dance, and so on. When that game arrives, I'll be the first to give it the thumbs-up.

But that's not to say that I disapprove of *TV Sports: Hockey*—such defects are negligible in light of the game's sharp graphics, solid game play and delightful five-player options. This one's recommended.

—C. B.

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Ms. Pac-Man

TENGEN

For the Sega Genesis ($39.95)

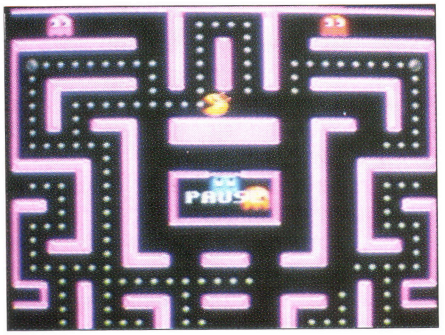
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

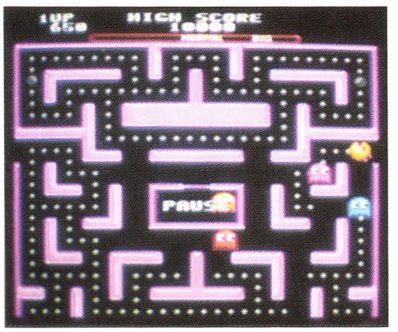
What can one say about *Ms. Pac-Man* that hasn't already been said—maybe five or six years ago? Only that ever since its coin-op release, home video-game manufacturers have been trying, with varying degrees of success, to bring it to the home screen. The latest attempts have been very successful, and now Tengen's Genesis version tops them all. In fact, the powerful 16-bit home systems are capable of doing so much more than simply reproducing the original game, publishers are now adding options and features to increase the playability and longevity of this old chestnut.

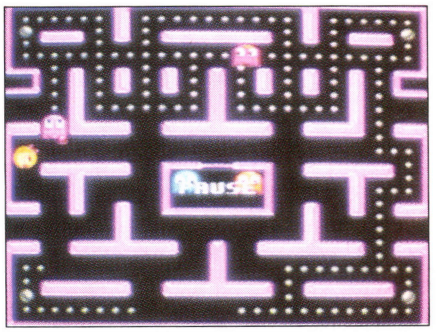
The basic version of the game perfectly emulates the arcade *Ms. Pac-Man*—later, after they bumped up the difficulty and took away the safe area in the third maze. In fact, it seems that the game actually looks a little *better* than the arcade version, with animation (in the intermission sequences) that occasionally seems smoother and more fluid than it did in the arcade. The sound effects are similarly authentic. The only concession to the home screen is in the way the screen scrolls. The original arcade monitor is taller than a TV set, so to fit the entire maze on the screen without changing the proportions, the maze scrolls to keep Ms. Pac-Man well in sight.

The game play (for the two of you who haven't seen this game in one form or another) is elementary. You guide the rotund little lady around a maze, chomping little dots and avoiding the ghosts Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Sue, whose touches are fatal. There are several larger power pellets you can also chomp: They temporarily turn the tables on the ghosts, who turn blue and flee from you while you gain extra points for chomping them. This advantage is only temporary, vanishing in seconds. In between mazes, there are small "cartoons" (a generous word for the bare bones little bouncing ball bits) describing the courtship and drama surrounding Ms. Pac-Man and her beau, Pac-Man himself.

Tengen's additions add mild interest to the scenario. There are four maze sets altogether: arcade, mini, big and strange. They're not quite as extreme as their names indicate: the mini mazes are still large enough to have to scroll a bit; the big mazes aren't terribly bigger than the default arcade mazes, and the strange mazes aren't particularly whacked out. They can, however, create a few moments of sudden panic when you discover that some openings aren't *quite* wide enough to allow passage, or that some corridors that look normal actually force you to go in ways you hadn't intended on going. Probably only the fans of the game that have gone to the trouble of memorizing strategies for the original mazes will be very thrown off by the alternate maze sets.



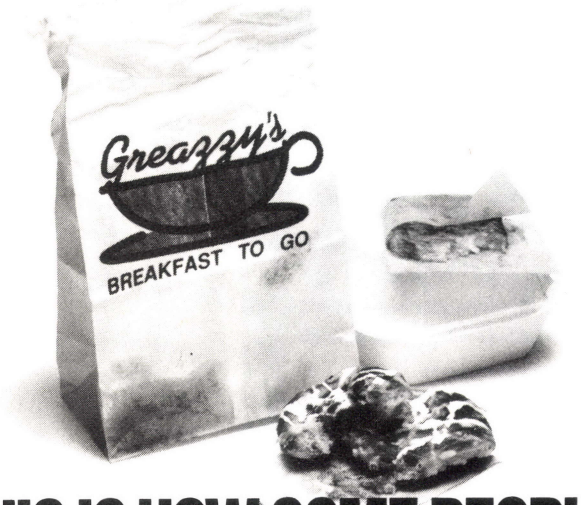




Other modes include one-player, two-player alternating and a couple of two-player simultaneous modes (competitive and cooperative), three different difficulty levels and the Pac-Boost. This boost option gives the game a different strategic spin by allowing you to move faster than the ghosts. With that advantage, if you're careless, you may find yourself running *into* ghosts rather than running from them.

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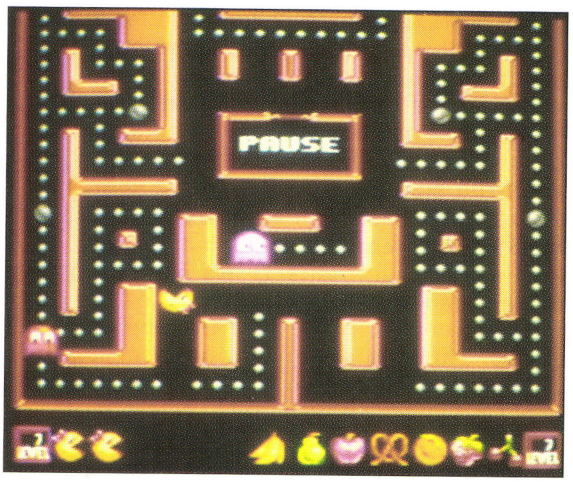
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The game earns "fives" for faultlessly duplicating the arcade version's mediocre sound and graphics, but extra points in the playability and overall categories for being such a playable, if technically outdated, re-creation. If you're a diehard who still can't get enough of the Ms. Pac-meister, or if you want what's currently the definitive version of an arcade classic in your very own home, this cartridge is *the* Pac-game to own—till the next version comes out anyway.

—Brent Walker

Tengen
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Ryne Sandberg Plays Bases Loaded 3

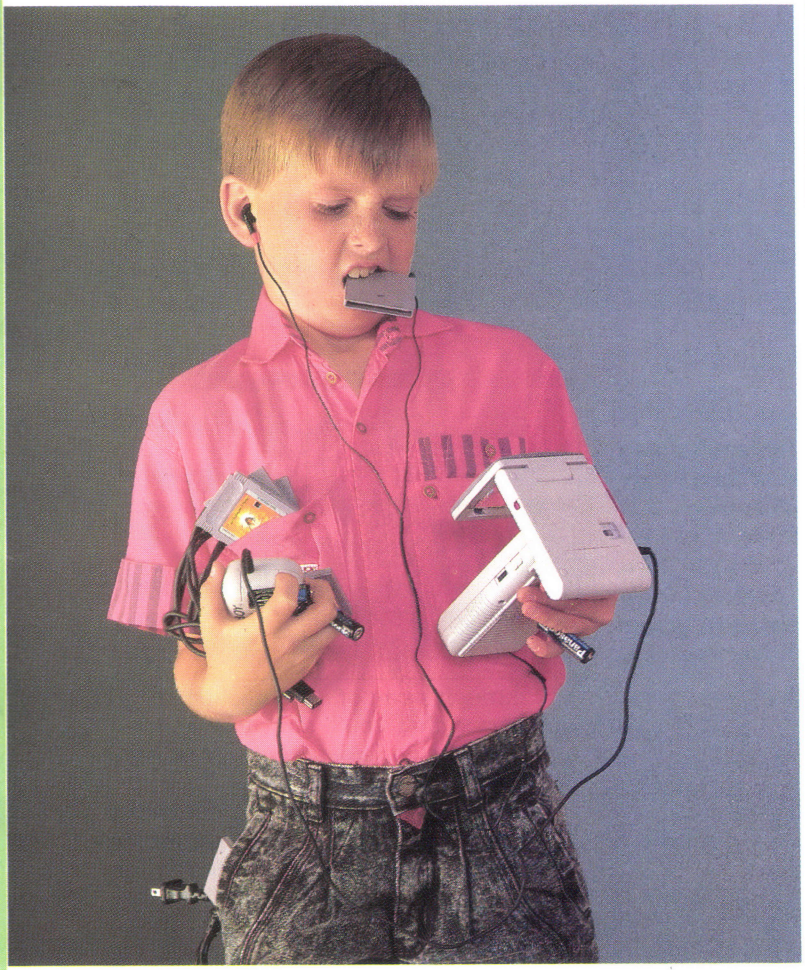
JALECO
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

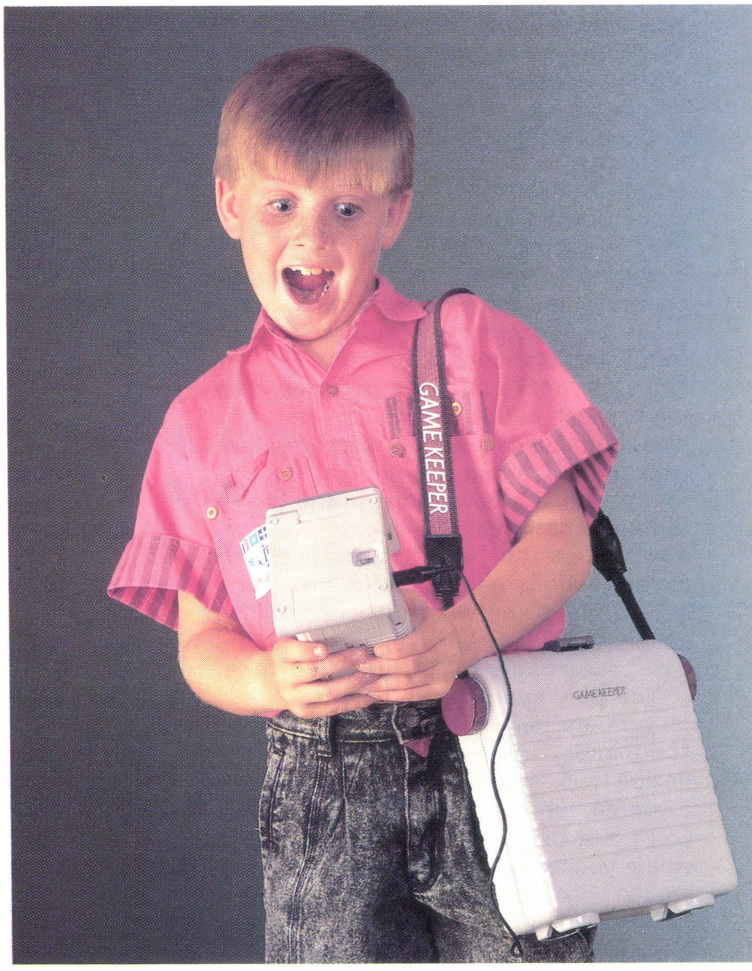
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

The name *Bases Loaded* has been synonymous with excellence in NES baseball games since the first issue of *Nintendo Power* magazine appeared with a photo feature that clearly illustrated how that first game was head and shoulders above the competition at the time.

That premier edition of *Nintendo Power* was mailed to everyone who had ever bought an NES or a game cartridge and filled out a warranty card, so it's easy to see why thousands of gamers recognize the name. *Bases Loaded 3* is the latest game in the series, and it carries the endorsement of All-Star second baseman Ryne Sandberg of the Chicago Cubs. No, Sandberg didn't have anything to do with the game's development, which was handled mostly in Japan.

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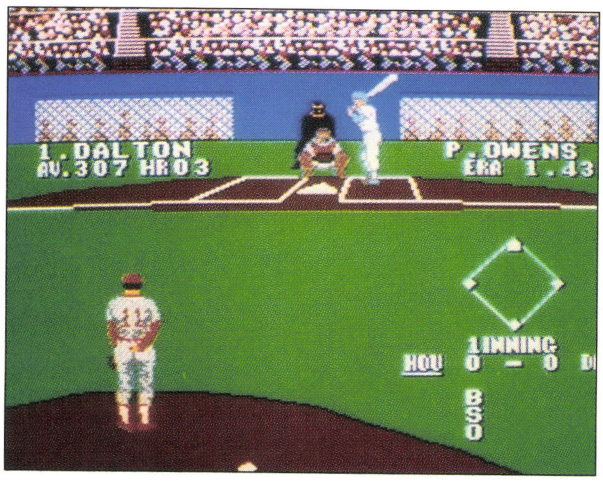
The key pieces of the first two games are intact, from the authoritative digitized voices of the umpires to the excellent player animation. One great feature that I'm glad to see again is the tremendous variety in the appearances of the pitchers and batters. Some batters are short, some are tall, some are right-handed and some are lefties, and each one has a different batting stance at the plate. Similarly, the pitchers all have different motions and individual uniform numbers—and some teams have relievers who can throw sidearm with the velocity of a cannon!

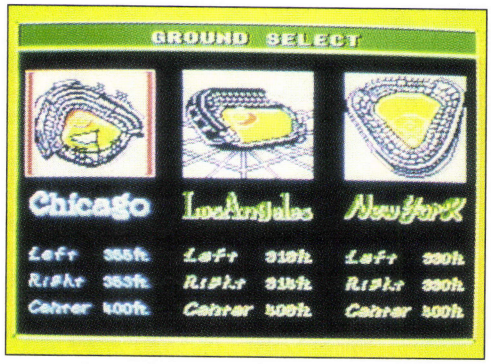
Interestingly, the game does not include a "playoffs" option. Instead, the computer monitors your performance in a one-player game and subtracts points from a perfect score of 100 each time you strike out, make an error, get caught trying to steal, etc. It's a unique, interesting idea, and Jaleco plans to reward gamers who can prove that they logged a perfect score against a Level 5 team, the game's biggest challenge. Of course, you can always use the "edit" team, a club of players whose names and statistics can be modified any way you choose. "Go ahead, build yourself a team of .496 hitters," encourages the instruction manual.

The play controls are very good—the players are generally responsive to your commands, and you have quite a bit of flexibility in issuing those commands. For example, when you're throwing a pitch, you point the controller in the direction where you want the pitch to go. Then, during the windup, you can control the degree to which the ball will move in that direction. Once you get used to the pitching mechanics, you'll find that you can accurately deliver the ball to almost any spot in the strike zone (or outside of it; wild pitches are not uncommon).

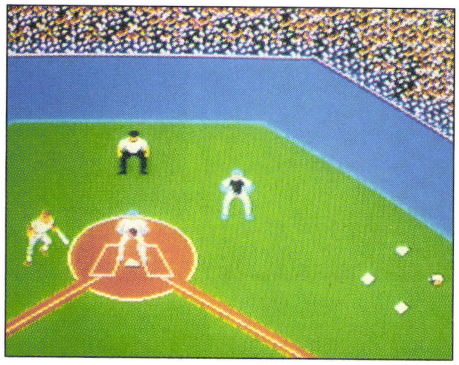
The fielding is not bad, either, but here's where *Bases Loaded 3* differs from the first two games in the series. When the ball is hit, your view of the action changes to an outfield perspective—the exact opposite of most NES baseball games. This means that longtime *Bases Loaded* fans are going to have to learn to point the control pad to the *left* to throw the ball to first base instead of the other way around. It really doesn't take long to adjust to the new perspective, and I applaud Jaleco for taking a risk by changing a formula that has proven to be successful.

Unfortunately, the game now suffers from the same problem described by Josh Mandel in his previous review of *Hardball!* for the Genesis in these very pages: When a ball leaves the infield, there's no way to tell where your outfielders are located! The flaw is magnified by the fact that the players don't automatically move to snare fly balls the way they did in the first game. There are times when a line drive will zip through a part of the outfield that's so barren that you'll start to wonder if your center fielder stepped out for a box of Cracker Jack.





Jaleco's *Ryne Sandberg Plays Bases Loaded 3* is as close as you can get to a perfect video baseball game for the NES.



My other gripes are as numerous as they are minor. I don't care for the way the players vanish into thin air when they strike out or the way they "skate" when moving around in the batter's box. When a ball is hit and the screen switches to a "long shot" of the action, the colors of the field inexplicably change to different shades of green and brown. And I'm still waiting for Japanese designers to include the National Anthem in their baseball games.

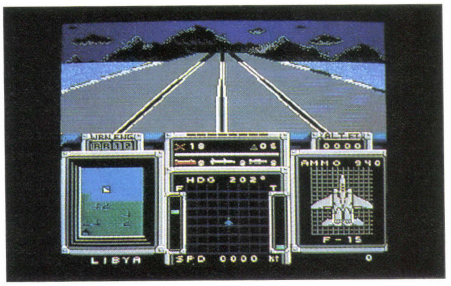
As pretentious as it may sound, I'll stand firmly by my belief that we have not yet seen the "perfect" NES baseball game, one that fully exploits the power of the console while remaining faithful to the heart of the sport as it's played in the United States. It's possible that some enterprising game designer will sit down one day and incorporate the best features of all the NES baseball games into one spectacular cartridge. Until that happens—if it ever does happen—*Ryne Sandberg Plays Bases Loaded 3* is currently about as close as you can get to that perfect game. And I wouldn't mind seeing a *Bases Loaded 4*, because Jaleco is getting closer every time.

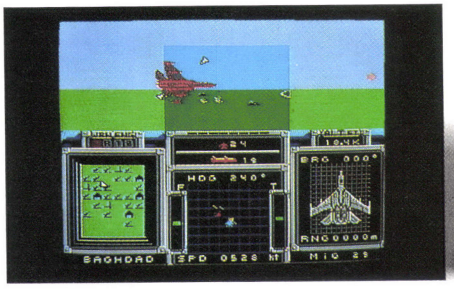
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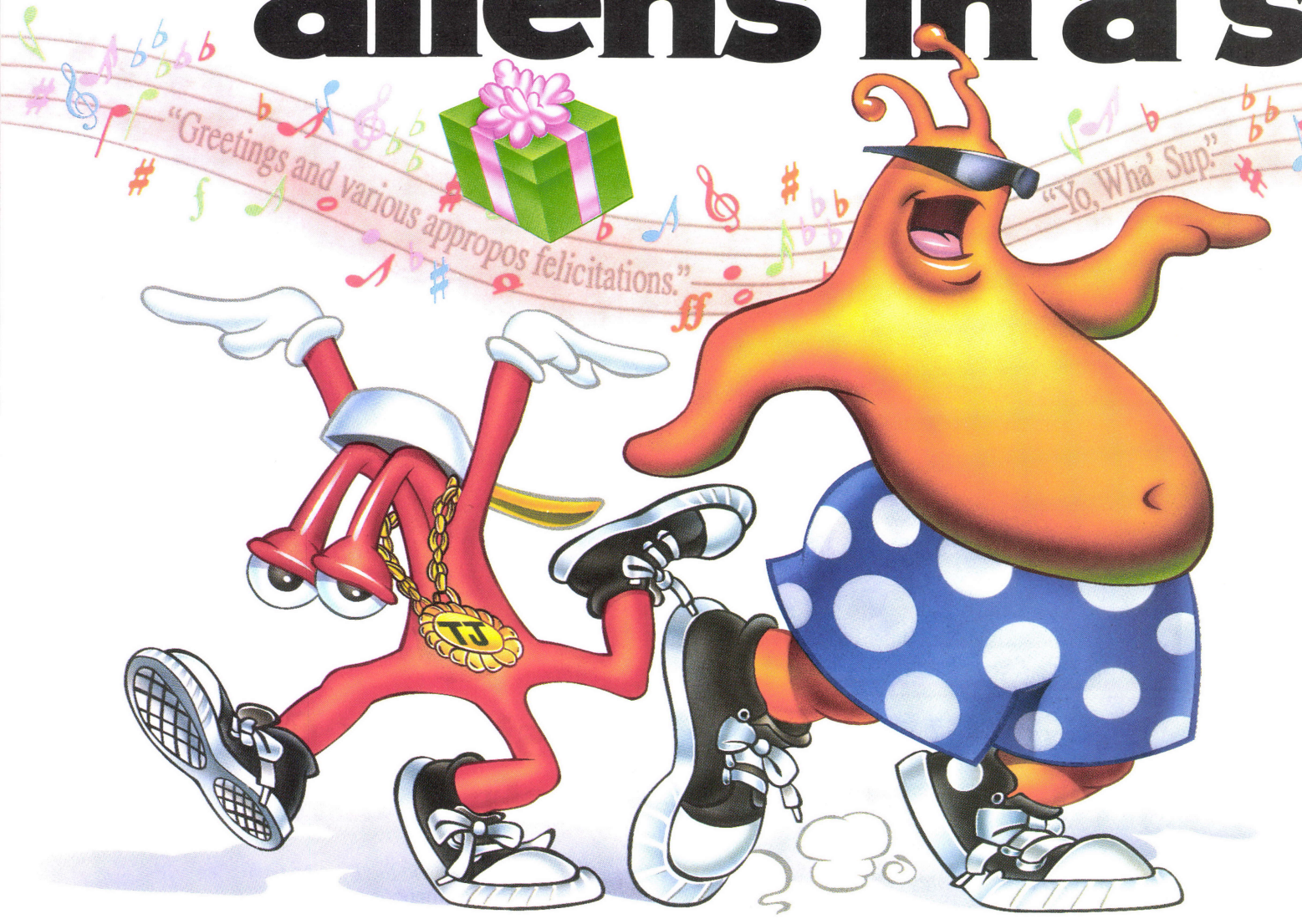
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Toe Jam and
aliens in a s



Yo. Wha'sup? My name is Toe-Jam, and this here is my homeboy Big Rappin' Earl (guess who's Big Earl). We're a couple of cold bussin' aliens from the planet Funkotron. Check it out, Earl crashed our hype cruising vessel on the most funked-up planet in the whole universe, Earth. Now the two of us are lookin' at a most magnanimous adventure.

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Supreme Funk Lord status. Whaddya say Earl? "Uh oh."

Say what? Oh sorry, Earl's pants fall down sometimes, he's still a Dufus. What my homey meant to say is that we gotta dis these freaky locals, like this mad dentist dude, the crazed shopper and worst of all, the nerd herd. But we'll be livin' large if we can find some of these presents, like rocket skates and tomato slingshots. So word up and chill out lazy Earth-dudes, 'cause we're jammin'.



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CIRCLE #130 ON READER SERVICE CARD.



THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Alexis built the TOZ weapon system into Dan's spacecraft. The TOZ weapon system is capable of "learning" new weapons by docking with the enemy ships and transferring that information to Dan's ship. Learn to use this ability to get new weapons and to power-up the weapons to a maximum of three.
- There are eight different weapons that can be learned, but you can use only one at a time. One of the best weapons is the Giga-Beam, which can be obtained from Gilbase, the mid-level boss of Stage 1, as well as refredly, an enemy that appears in Stage 2.
- You can also get the ultimate weapon, the T-Braster, by shooting TOZ six times before you capture an enemy. You must repeat this on each new stage.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

SFS

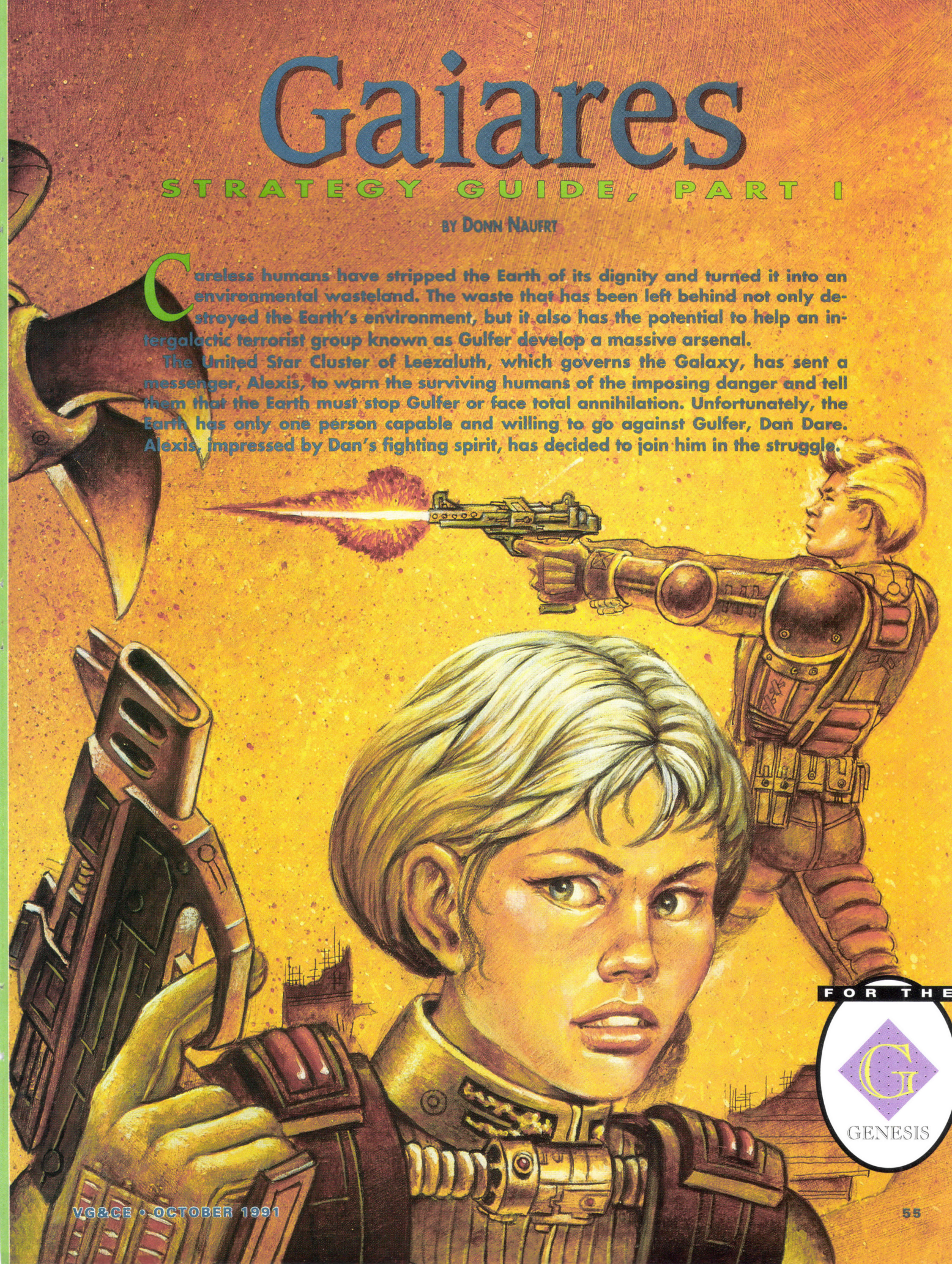
Gaiares

STRATEGY GUIDE, PART I

BY DONN NAUERT

Careless humans have stripped the Earth of its dignity and turned it into an environmental wasteland. The waste that has been left behind not only destroyed the Earth's environment, but it also has the potential to help an intergalactic terrorist group known as Gulfer develop a massive arsenal.

The United Star Cluster of Leezaluth, which governs the Galaxy, has sent a messenger, Alexis, to warn the surviving humans of the imposing danger and tell them that the Earth must stop Gulfer or face total annihilation. Unfortunately, the Earth has only one person capable and willing to go against Gulfer, Dan Dare. Alexis, impressed by Dan's fighting spirit, has decided to join him in the struggle.



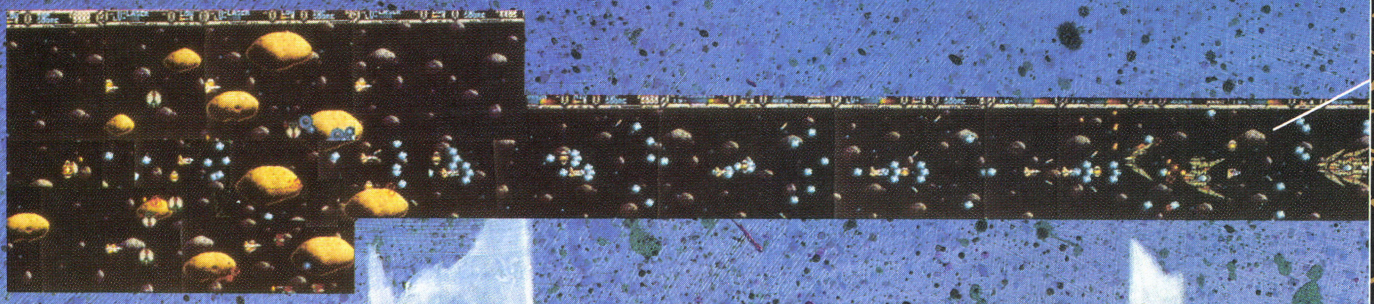
FOR THE GENESIS

FLOATING CONTINENT

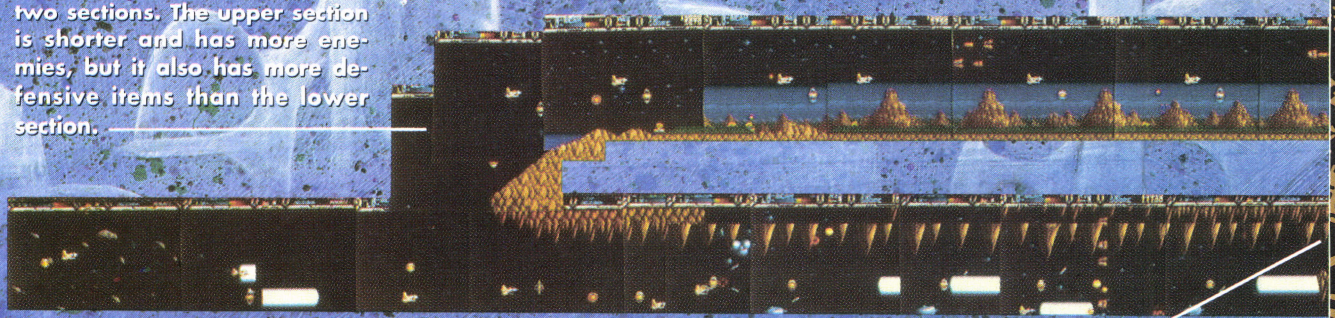
STAGE 1



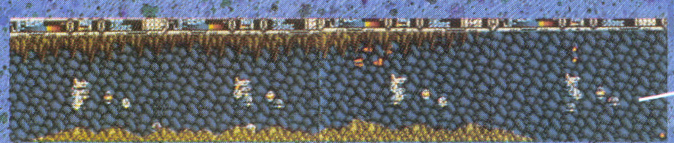
Take on these low-level enemies before entering the asteroid belt.



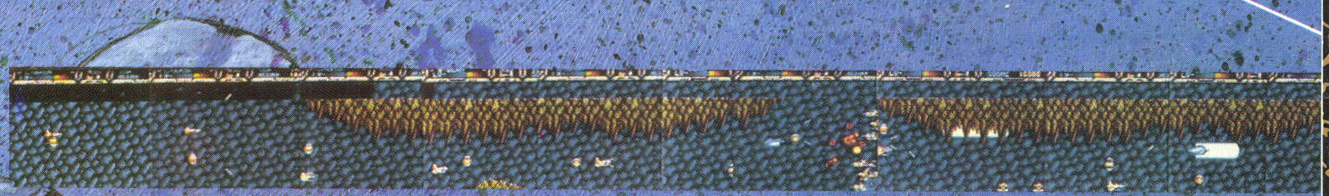
Once you get past the Gilbase, you'll enter the second half of the stage, which is divided into two sections. The upper section is shorter and has more enemies, but it also has more defensive items than the lower section.



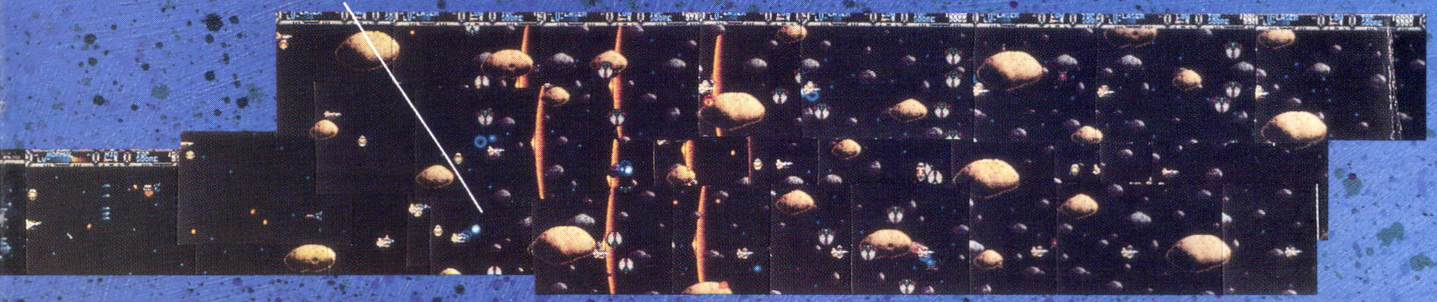
Watch for falling stalactites in this section.



The end of each section marks the final assault on the floating continent as you do battle with Galudia.



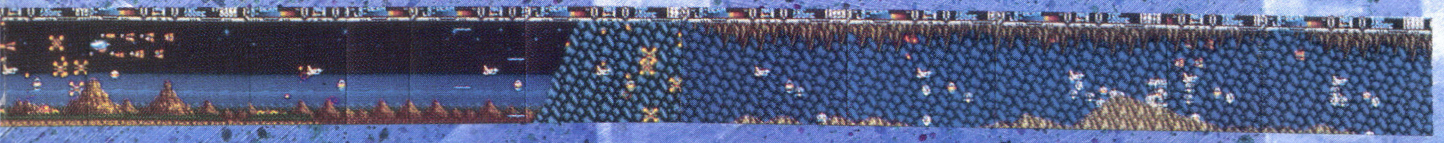
Once you're in the asteroid belt you'll be able to move farther up and down than what is shown here. The Gultartle will be out in force. You can learn the Plasma cannon at this point from the Gultartle.

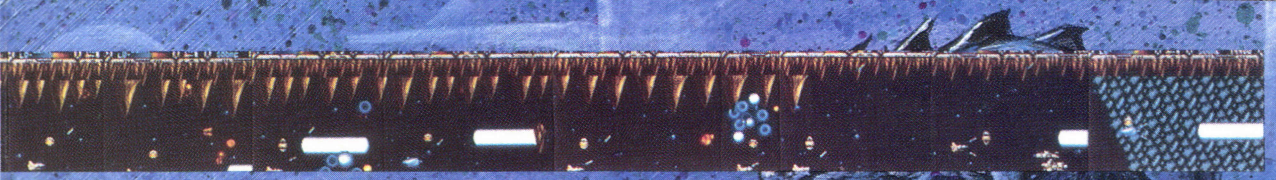


When you leave the asteroid belt, you'll face the mid-level boss, Gilbase. There are three sections of Gilbase that will combine to form one enemy.

At this point it'll begin to attack with the Giga-beam. You can learn the Giga-beam from it and return fire.



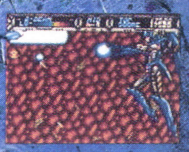




GALUDIA

Stage 1 End Boss





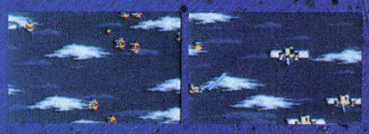
Galudia will fire three-directional bullets at you that should be easy to avoid.

When Galudia puts its hands together, it will shoot three powerful energy beams at you. To avoid them, as the first one is shot, you should move up or down (depending on your location) when the shots are fired. They will be targeted for where you were and not where you are. Use the Giga-beam—or whatever weapon you have—to destroy it.

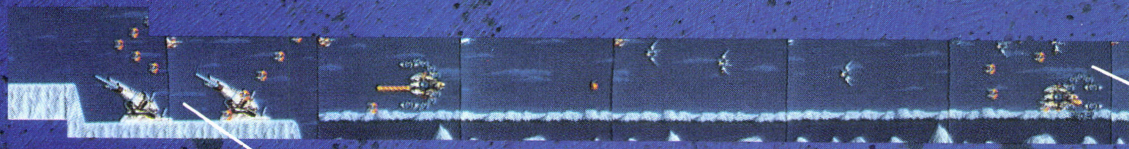


GLACIAL PLANET

STAGE 2

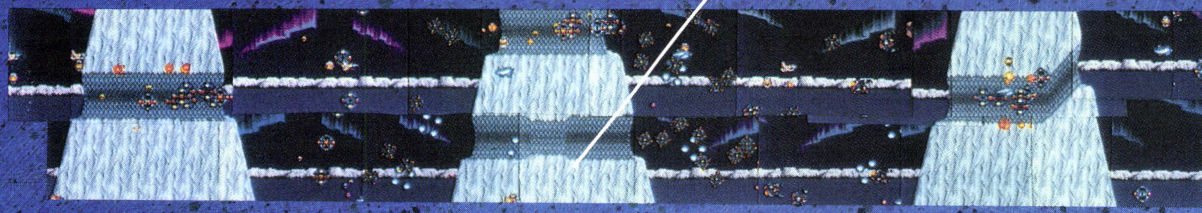


When you start this stage, you'll find yourself soaring downward with Laguide and other enemies flying at you. You can easily get the T-Braster or Summersalt laser here as well. If you stay in the bottom left-hand corner, you should be fine for most of the way.

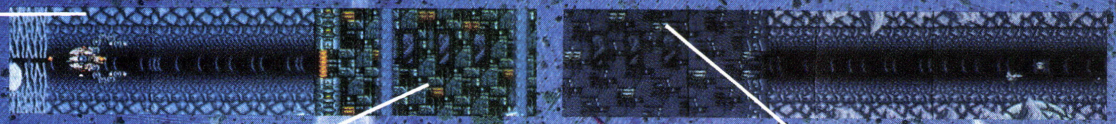


These laser cannons will fire quick rounds at you, but their fixed angle leaves them ineffective. You can destroy them with the T-Braster, but it's difficult; the screen moves too quickly for you to have enough time.

Other weapons like the Summersalt and Horizontal lasers might work better in this area. If you take the top tunnel, you'll find a break defender.



Three refredlys are waiting for you at the end.

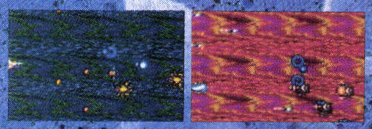


Make it past the entrance in the center before the gate closes. The chamber will then fill with water as ruedges attack. You can stay on the left side of the screen just below center to get by them.

When the screen begins to move to the right, you'll need to move through the center entrance.

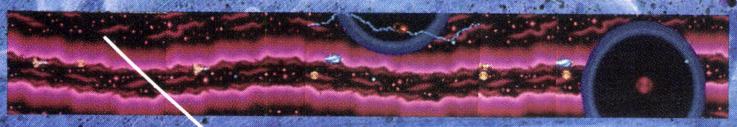
SPACE SANCTUARY

STAGE 3



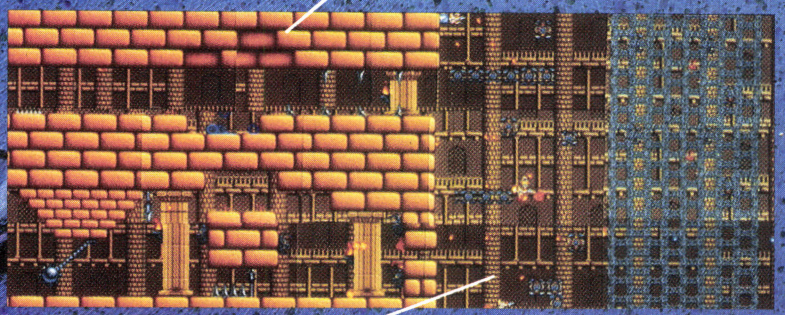


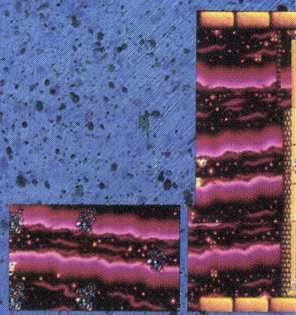
This is Nether Space (which is actually much longer than three photos), where you will first encounter Despiders. If you stay in decenter of descreen, you can get past them and the missile-launching enemies that follow. The volken that appears will fire bullets from his arms and lunge forward at you. With your speed at max, you can fire and quickly move up or down to avoid the shots and the volken himself. The beginning of this section is an excellent place to try for the T-Braster.



Once you're by the volken, you'll enter an area with black holes everywhere. They will also be your biggest obstacles.

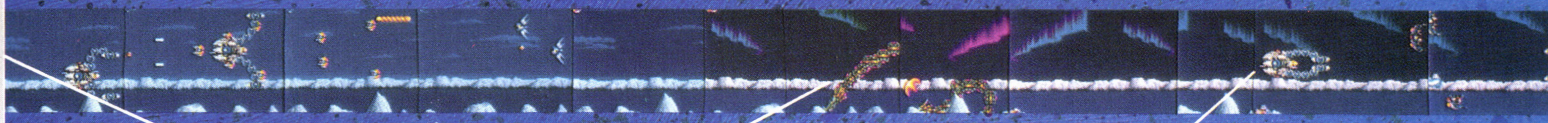
The roof here will begin to collapse—you can hang back as they fall. To get by the spikes in this area, set your speed on max, stay in the center of the screen, then quickly move across. The spikes should fall immediately behind you.





Once you're out of this area, you'll face an onslaught of these blue enemies as you approach the traps.

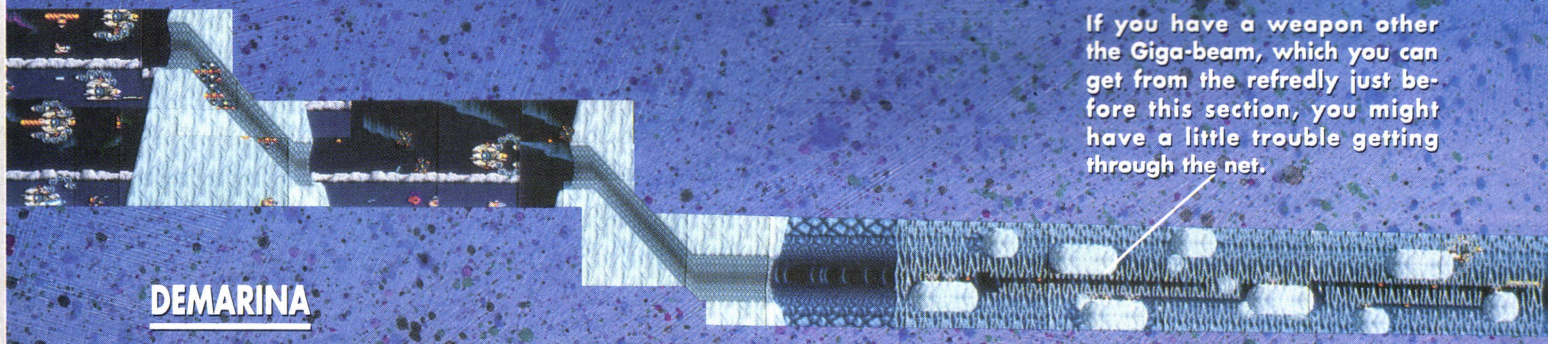
SFS



Rabute and refredly run rampant in this section. Try to get the Giga-beam if you can.

Wavedragon, the Stage 2 mid-level boss, can be destroyed by using a circular motion around the screen (following the edges) and by using the Giga-beam. It should take about four shots to the head to destroy it.

You will have to face three refredlys before entering the tunnels.



If you have a weapon other the Giga-beam, which you can get from the refredly just before this section, you might have a little trouble getting through the net.

DEMARINA

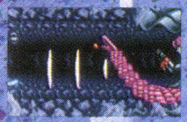
STAGE 2 END BOSS



Demarina will appear as a clam. Initially, she will use a laser cannon to fire four shots at you. You can move in close enough that the laser fire will not hit you, but you must shoot the opening to do damage, which will result in her coming out of her shell.



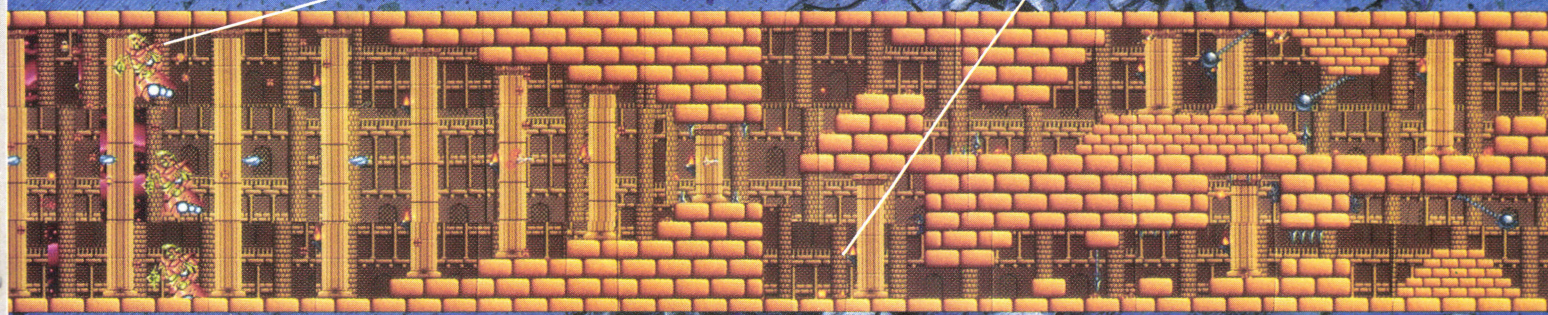
Once she actually appears, she will fire one small shot at you...



...then fire shock waves straight ahead. From the left side of the screen, move up and down to avoid the small bullets, but make sure you move high or low enough that the shock waves don't hit you.

Volken is also the first enemy you'll face in the sanctuary. Although there are three shown in the map, there's really only one.

Once again you'll have your choice of pathways. The upper path has fewer enemies as well as a wide opening at the end.



The traps or guillotines can be tricky. You must shoot the chain through the small opening at the bottom quickly enough so that the blade will fall. If you don't, you will either run into the chain or the blade and lose a life.



DEATH GHETTO

STAGE 3 END BOSS



Death Ghetto will first materialize on the left side of the screen. Unless you have one of the homing-missile weapons, you won't really be able to do anything except dodge the rotating blades at this point.



After Death Ghetto sends three rotating blades at you, he will then dissolve and possibly move to the right side of the screen. He will not hurt you at this point, but be ready for him to appear on the left side again.

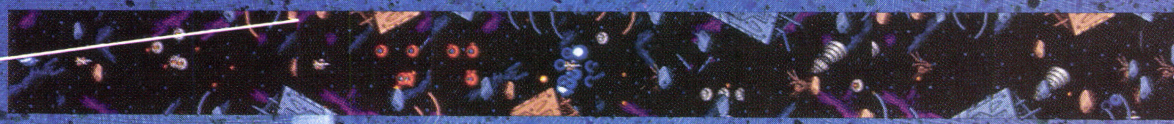


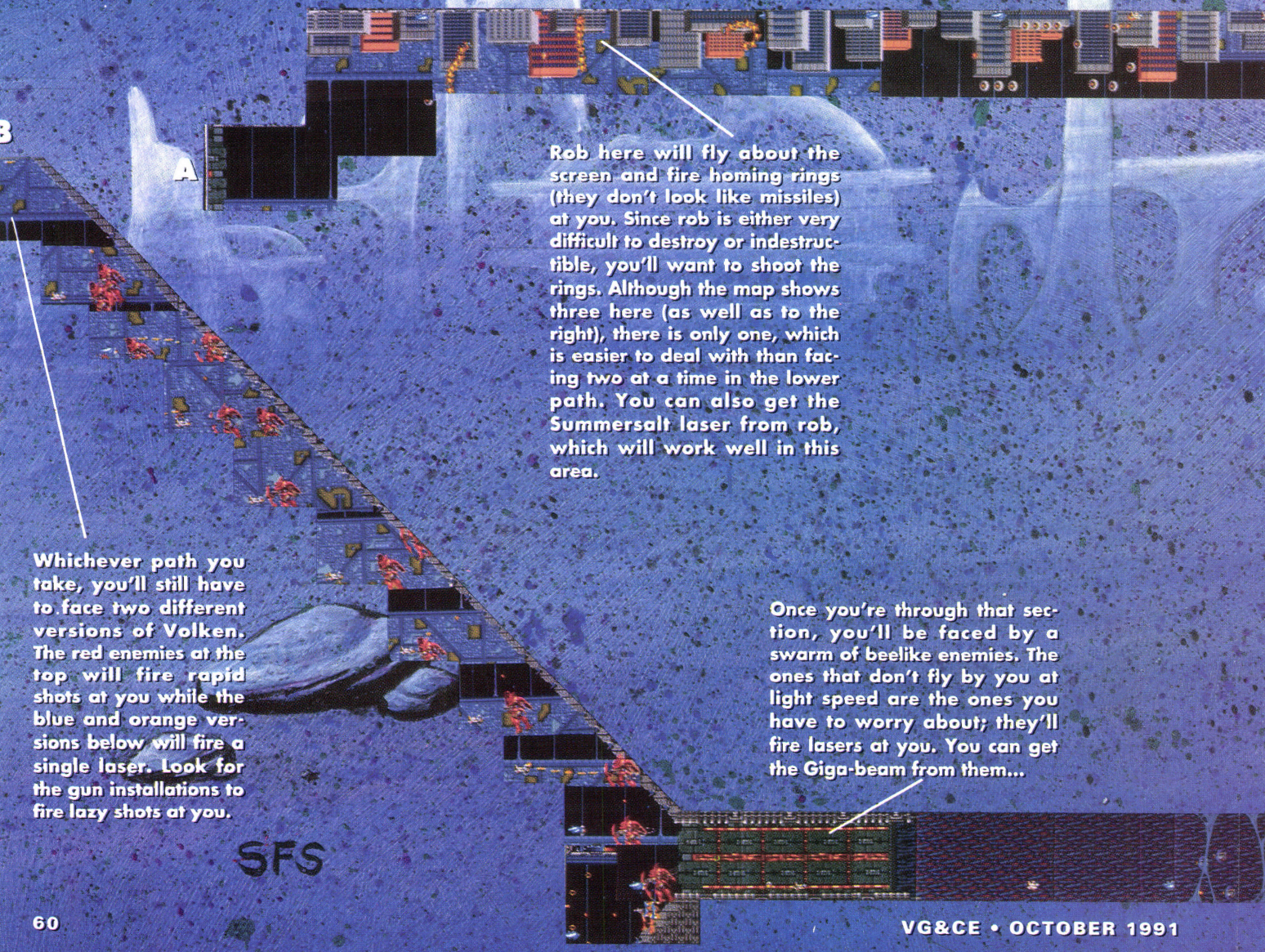
If he appears on the right side, blast him in the skull with whatever weapon you have. When he is on the left side of the screen, the rotating blades will move straight across. When he's on the right side, the first two blades will travel straight, but the third will follow you. If you move in a large counter-clockwise pattern, you should be able to avoid the blade. Death Ghetto isn't that difficult to kill, even with your normal weapon at full power you should be able to defeat him by the time he appears on the right side the third or fourth time around.

SPACE COLONY

STAGE 4

The best thing to remember here is that if it moves—or appears to move (float)—shoot it. If it doesn't move, then you should move around it.



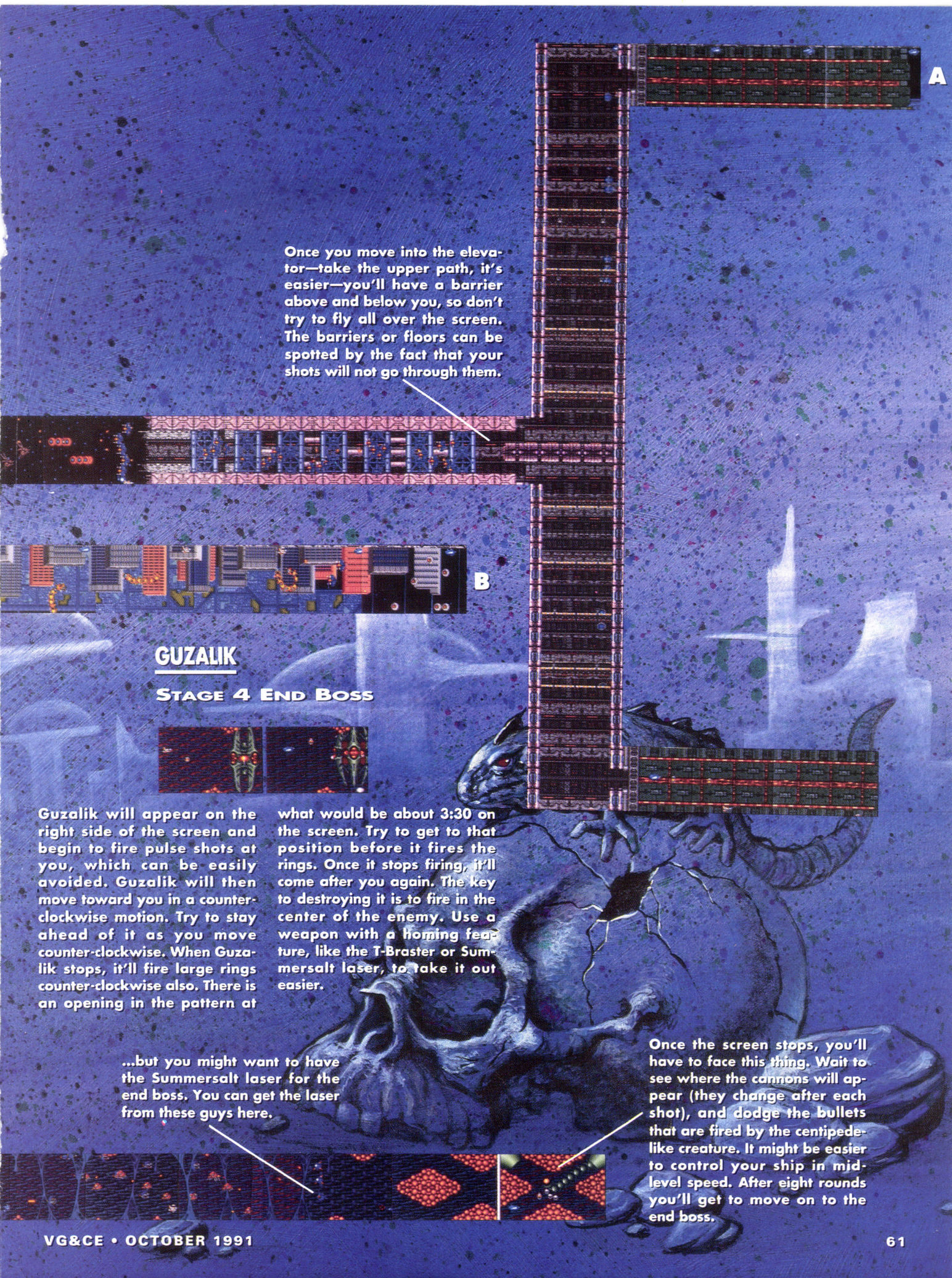


Rob here will fly about the screen and fire homing rings (they don't look like missiles) at you. Since rob is either very difficult to destroy or indestructible, you'll want to shoot the rings. Although the map shows three here (as well as to the right), there is only one, which is easier to deal with than facing two at a time in the lower path. You can also get the Summersalt laser from rob, which will work well in this area.

Whichever path you take, you'll still have to face two different versions of Volken. The red enemies at the top will fire rapid shots at you while the blue and orange versions below will fire a single laser. Look for the gun installations to fire lazy shots at you.

Once you're through that section, you'll be faced by a swarm of beelike enemies. The ones that don't fly by you at light speed are the ones you have to worry about; they'll fire lasers at you. You can get the Giga-beam from them...

SFS



Once you move into the elevator—take the upper path, it's easier—you'll have a barrier above and below you, so don't try to fly all over the screen. The barriers or floors can be spotted by the fact that your shots will not go through them.

GUZALIK

Stage 4 End Boss

Guzalik will appear on the right side of the screen and begin to fire pulse shots at you, which can be easily avoided. Guzalik will then move toward you in a counter-clockwise motion. Try to stay ahead of it as you move counter-clockwise. When Guzalik stops, it'll fire large rings counter-clockwise also. There is an opening in the pattern at what would be about 3:30 on the screen. Try to get to that position before it fires the rings. Once it stops firing, it'll come after you again. The key to destroying it is to fire in the center of the enemy. Use a weapon with a homing feature, like the T-Braster or Summersalt laser, to take it out easier.

...but you might want to have the Summersalt laser for the end boss. You can get the laser from these guys here.

Once the screen stops, you'll have to face this thing. Wait to see where the cannons will appear (they change after each shot), and dodge the bullets that are fired by the centipede-like creature. It might be easier to control your ship in mid-level speed. After eight rounds you'll get to move on to the end boss.

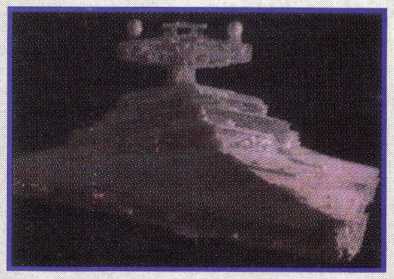
STAR WARS THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK™

PREVIEW

BY MIKE DAVILA

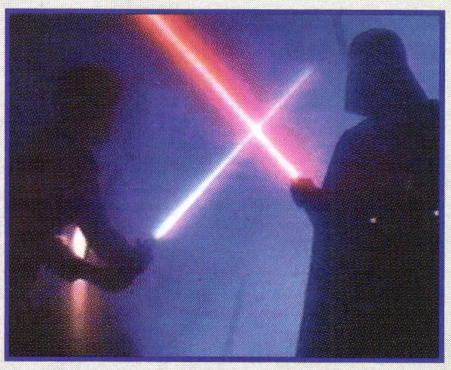
It is a dark time for the 8-bit video-game industry. Although 16-bit consoles and video games have not superseded the 8-bit market, they have begun to gain momentum. Gamers from every part of the galaxy are turning toward this new technology. Will the software developers and video-game enthusiasts abandon the old technology for the new?

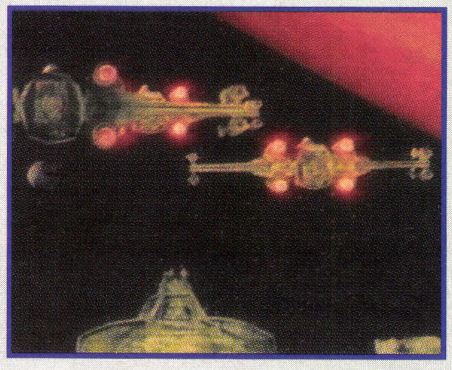
No, at least not yet ...



The video-game industry is said to follow a cyclical pattern. In many ways this is true; after all, isn't the industry in a slight slump right now? Maybe that's due to the economy, but lately we've seen games that contain themes or characters that were released for video-game systems almost ten years ago. How many remember Parker Brothers' *Spider-Man* for the Atari 2600? Hmmm, haven't I seen that somewhere else recently? Even the *Star Wars* saga has found new life in today's bear market. Maybe it's the attractive marketability of these products that make them worth a second trip on the video-game roller coaster.

The Empire Strikes Back, the second title in the *Star Wars* trilogy, is currently being developed for the NES by Lucasfilm Games and will be published/distributed through JVC Musical Industries. Let's take a look at why this game is a hot ticket.





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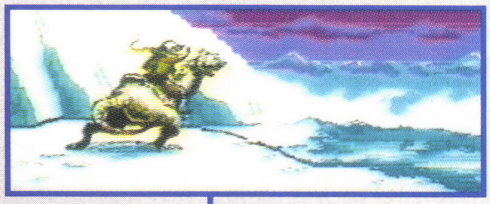
USING THE FORCE

If you've played *Star Wars*, don't expect to see the same scenario in *The Empire Strikes Back*. The game's format and play has been completely revamped to follow the plot (naturally) of the movie. According to Kalani Streicher, video-game producer of *The Empire Strikes Back*, the game was developed by a different programing team (Sculptured Software) than *Star Wars* and will be segmented into eight different levels with the sixth and seventh levels divided into two parts.

All of the action takes place on three different planets, each with its own environment and threats, and gamers are offered a choice of several vehicles to control. Currently the game is composed of two megabits of program code, plus two megabits of graphics (commonly known in the video-game industry as a "two plus two" configuration) and makes use of the specialized Nintendo MMC3 custom graphics chip.

The first level of the game kicks off on Hoth, the remote ice planet where the Rebel Alliance (on the run from the Empire) has established a secret base of operation.

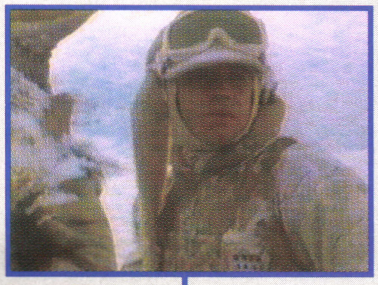
The player assumes the role of Luke Skywalker and is called to investigate what appears to be a meteor that has fallen onto the planet. Upon Luke's arrival, he discovers that the meteor is in fact an Imperial probe droid.





The gamer controls Luke and his tauntaun (in a side-scroller) through a series of ice caverns that are infested with probe droids, wampa ice creatures, and a variety of other ice-cave-dwelling beasties. Parts of the ice cavern are impassable, and the player must dismount from the tauntaun in order to traverse the area.

At several points along the way you are reminded by Obi-Wan Kenobi to "use the Force" and "the lightsaber is the weapon of the Jedi." A window that appears in the center of the screen with a digitized photo of Obi-Wan is the source. Han Solo also offers advice and information as the game progresses.



Scheduled for release during the first quarter of 1992, *The Empire Strikes Back* will closely follow the plot of the movie.

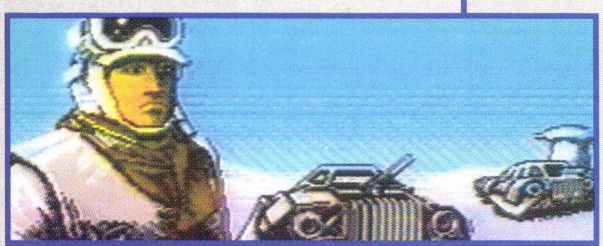
Other items that the player will find are food power-ups for your tauntaun, a lightsaber and "Force" powers. Force powers can be collected and then used when desired or needed. Each of the powers renders a different effect; for example, some will allow you to levitate, others enhance running and jumping, deflect blaster shots with the lightsaber, power-up the lightsaber for greater damage and, finally, some will allow you to heal Luke.

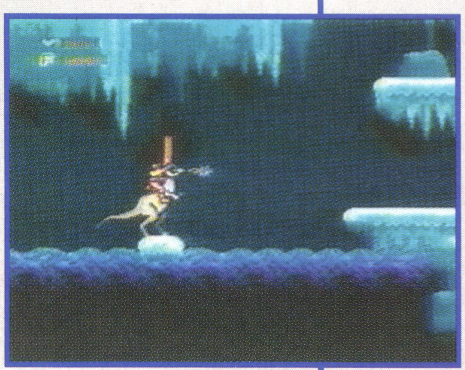
Level 2 also takes place on Hoth, but this time you control Luke as he pilots the snowspeeder. The Imperial forces have landed on the planet and are advancing toward the rebel base. Using the snowspeeder, the player must destroy the advancing squadron of Imperial Walkers.

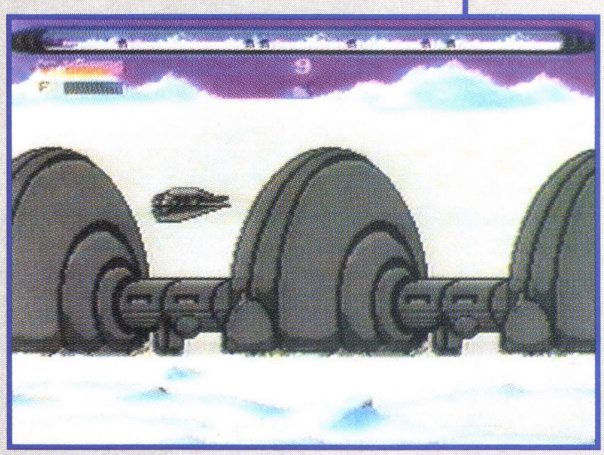
A status screen at the top of the playfield keeps the gamer informed by indicating the position of the snowspeeder on the surface of the planet and also the positions of all the remaining advancing walkers. There are also two other indicators or meters (a little heart with a side-bar-style graph) that show how much energy is left before Luke's snowspeeder is destroyed and a meter indicating how much Force power Luke has remaining.

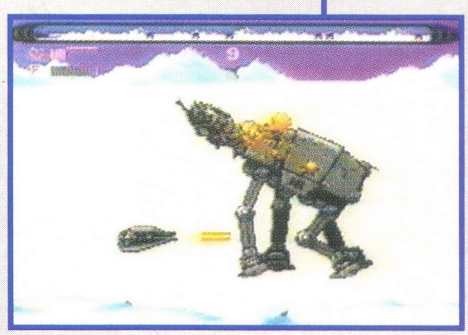
If your ship takes enough hits and does go down, Luke gets a second chance. Emerging from the crashed snowspeeders wreckage, you must now control Luke by walking or running on the planet's icy surface.

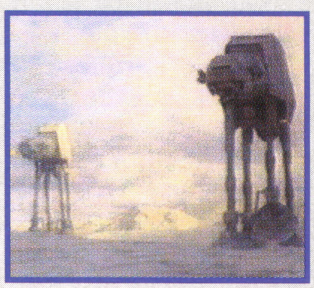
Once on the ground, besides being besieged by a column of advancing Imperial Walkers, you must watch out for enemy stormtroopers that are firing their blasters at you. Every time you take a stormtrooper out, or other enemy located throughout the game, a heart will appear in its











Developed by Lucasfilm Games and published through JVC, *Empire*'s story line will revolve around three different worlds and will encompass approximately eight different levels of game play.

place and float gently to the ground. If the gamer is quick enough to catch the heart before it reaches the ground and disappears, it will increase Luke's strength. Unoccupied snowspeeders are located on the ground and scattered at various locations in this phase, so if you've wrecked one, you'll be able to hop into a new one just down the road.

After destroying all the Imperial Walkers in this stage, Luke returns to the base only to discover that Princess Leia's escape route is cut off. This is the final stage that takes place on the planet Hoth. In this level, Luke must search throughout the rebel base and try to rescue Leia from the invading stormtroopers. As Luke searches the base for Leia, some of the obstacles he will encounter include the AT-ST (otherwise known as the Imperial Chicken Walker) and a large number of stormtroopers. At one point, Luke comes across a vacant chicken walker that can be boarded and used to find the princess.

The next two levels of *Empire* take place on Yoda's home planet—the jungle world of Dagobah. After the rebel forces abandon the base at Hoth, Luke journeys to Dagobah in search of the Jedi master. In the fourth level, Luke must traverse the jungle while avoiding a collection of dangerous, indigenous creatures that are located in the trees and in the swamps.

Once the player locates Yoda, the fifth level of the game begins. Here Luke, with the guidance of Yoda, undergoes intensive Jedi training. This part of the game focuses around Luke and learning how to use his newly acquired Force powers. The level culminates with Luke confronting Darth Vader in what turns out to be a metaphysical struggle with himself.

After Luke completes his Jedi training, you advance to the next level, which takes place outside of the Cloud City on the planet Bespin. Luke must first penetrate the defenses of the city before landing. The gamer, using a speedy X-wing fighter, must dogfight with numerous TIE fighters and Cloud Cars.

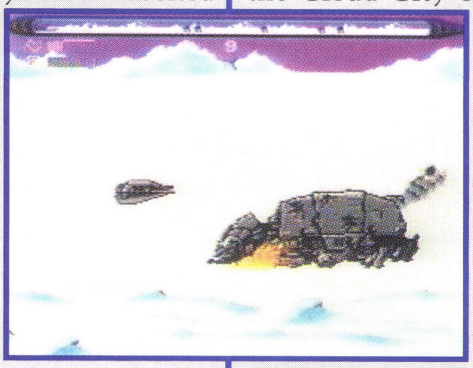
As soon as all of the enemies are destroyed, you then proceed to the Cloud City itself.

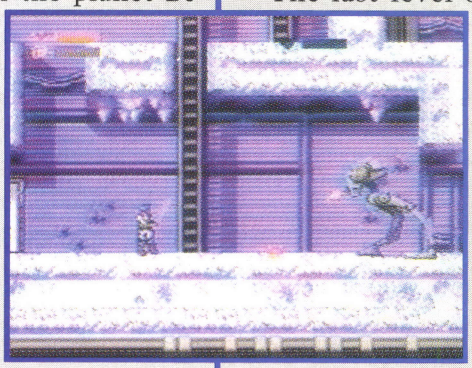
Once inside of Cloud City, you learn that Han Solo is being held captive by enemy bounty hunters, and you must rescue him. This level is reminiscent of the level where Luke must rescue Leia at the rebel base. Instead of stormtroopers, you're dealing with bounty hunters. After all the bounty hunters have been defeated, you are informed that Boba Fett has fled Cloud City and that Luke must go after him. In this section of the game Luke goes head-to-head in his X-wing fighter against Boba's ship until Boba is destroyed.

The last level of the game has Luke returning to Cloud City to battle Darth Vader in the final conflict. The gamer must fight Darth in a hand-to-hand duel using the lightsaber.

Throughout the game the original soundtrack and music from the motion picture accompany the game play to produce a completely enthralling *Empire* atmosphere.

As I previously mentioned, the game is still under development at Lucasfilm, and the last couple of levels of the game have not been completed. Many of the features and details described in this preview will more than likely be modified in some form or another. *The Empire Strikes Back* is scheduled for release in February 1992 and is expected to sell in around the $44.95-$49.95 range.

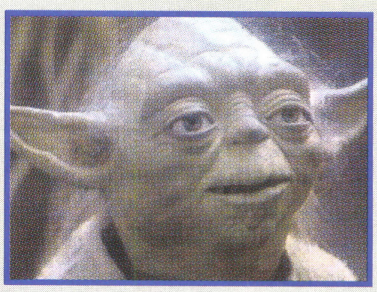








The gamer, as Luke Skywalker, will be able to control a variety of vehicles; including, a snowspeeder, tauntaun, AT-ST and an X-wing fighter.

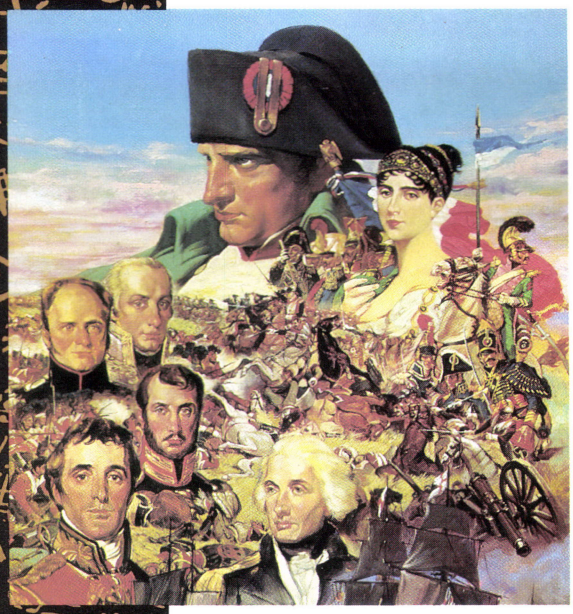


Certain levels in *The Empire Strikes Back* will require Luke to improve the control of all of his Force powers and skills.



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EXPLORE THE PAGES OF HISTORY



L'EMPEREUR™

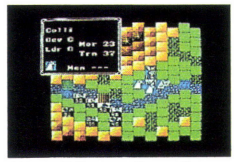
In this epic, KOEI carries you back to the turbulent time of the late 18th Century. Live the life of Napoleon as he rises to power, starting out as a mere commander and eventually gaining respect as an Emperor. Organize your troops and lead them into battles against the super powers of the era. Napoleon was a hero of great ambition and distinction, can you live up to his reputation?

***New for PC Version** : Ad-Lib Sound Board Support, Mouse Support*

***NES Version**: 3 megabit cartridge, MMC-5 microchip 128K RAM, Battery back-up*

(Release Dates: 9/91 PC/Comp., 11/91 NES)

NES screen shot shown

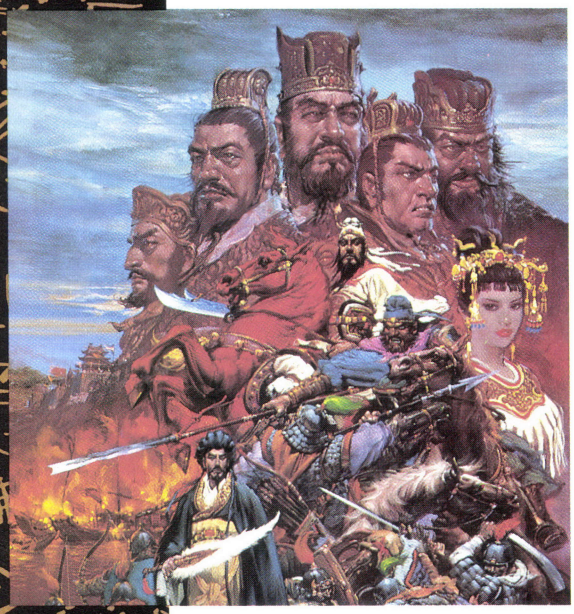


Use artillery and cavalry forces to crush your foes

PC screen shot shown



Extend your influence throughout Europe



Romance® II of The Three Kingdoms

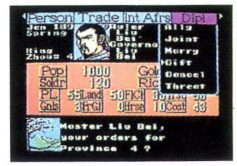
China is in a state of chaos! In a race against time, struggle to unify the country before it's overtaken by greedy warmongers! Develop alliances with other rulers and together attack stronger foes! Guide your people to enrich the land and expand your territory by driving out the evil forces. Make your mark on the pages of history by unifying China before it's too late!

***New for PC Version:** Ad-Lib Sound Board Support*

***NES Version**: 4 megabit cartridge, MMC-5 microchip 256K RAM, Battery back-up*

(Release Dates: 9/91 PC/Comp., 11/91 Amiga, 8/91 NES)

NES screen shot shown



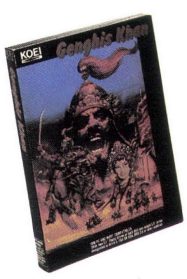
New pull-down menus

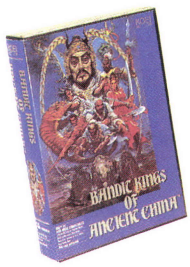
PC screen shot shown



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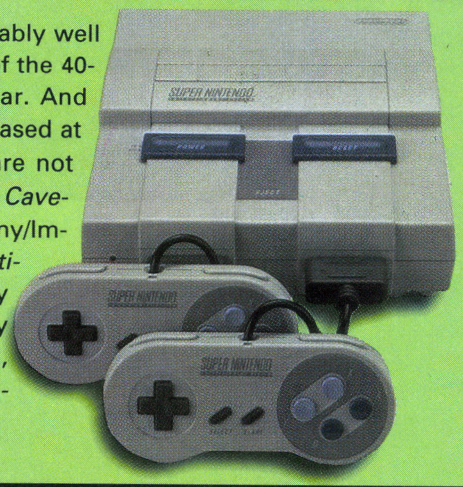
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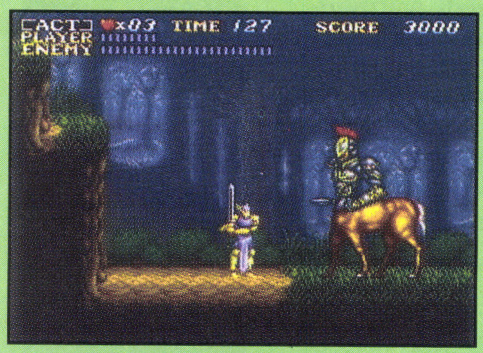
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THE Super NES

INTRODUCTION

Many of you will have already purchased the Super NES and are probably well into *Super Mario World* by now. The following is a small collection of the 40-plus games that will, hopefully, be available by the end of this year. And that's just to start things off. There'll be plenty of new SNES video games released at the start of the new year. Other games that will possibly be released but are not shown in this feature include: *Darius Twin* by Taito, *Hat Trick Hero* by Taito, *Caveman Ninja* by Data East, *Smart Ball* by Sony/Imagesoft, *Extra Innings* by Sony/Imagesoft, *Raiden* by Electro Brain, *Castlevania IV* by Konami, *Legend of the Mystical Ninja* by Konami, *Big Run* by Jaleco, *Augusta Golf* by T&E Soft, *Drakken* by Kemco-Seika, *Bombuzal* by Kemco-Seika, *Populous* by Acclaim, *Smash TV* by Acclaim, *Super WWF Wrestlemania* by Acclaim, *RPG Racing* by Interplay, *Super Battletank* by Absolute Entertainment, *Super Mega Force* by Toho, *Ultraman* by Bandai and *SD Super Battle Dodgeball* by Bandai.





ACTRAISER

ENIX

October 1991 (NA)

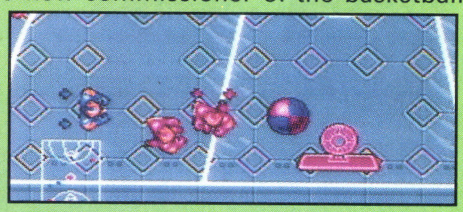
Vicious monsters have taken over the land, and the people live in fear. That is, until you stepped forward to lead the way. Now your people have turned to you for guidance. Each land is divided into two sections: an "action mode" and a "simulation mode." The action mode is where most of the fighting is done, whereas in the simulation mode you must work with your people to help construct and protect housing and build roads. You must defeat the monsters in six lands before your people can live in peace.

BILL LAIMBEER'S COMBAT BASKETBALL

HUDSON SOFT

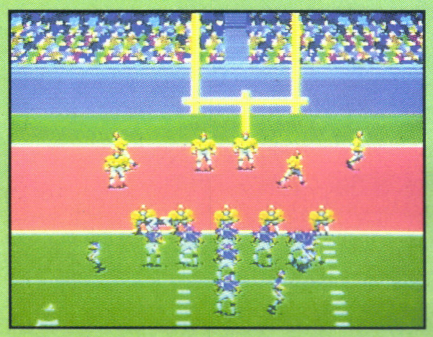
November 1991 ($59.95)

Forced to retire by the basketball league, Bill Laimbeer had been unseen and unheard of for nearly 40 years. Then, in the year 2030, he mysteriously resurfaces as the new commissioner of the basketball league. And the game's going to be played his way, with no referees or personal fouls. The sport is no longer basketball. It's *Bill Laimbeer's Combat Basketball.*





BY DONN NAUERT



John Madden Football

ELECTRONIC ARTS

December 1991 ($59.95)

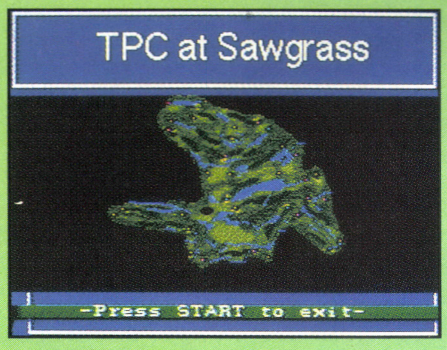
Electronic Arts will increase its Electronic Arts Sports Network (EASN) by introducing the first of three sports games for the Super NES. This version includes all the features found in the others, including the weather conditions, audibles, end zone celebrations and even updates (complete with highlights) from other games played around the league.



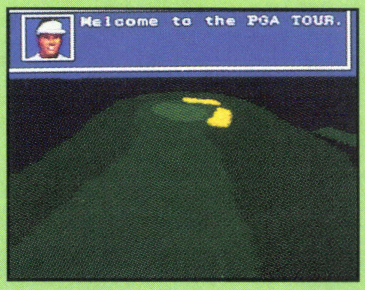
PGA TOUR Golf

ELECTRONIC ARTS

December 1991 ($59.95)



This golf game features some of the top tournaments played at the world's top courses, including the Players Championship at Sawgrass, PGA West at PGA West Stadium Course, the Kemper Open at Avenel and the Honda Classic at Eagle Trace. You play on even terms against 60 of the TOUR's best pros. In addition, the current top-ten PGA TOUR stars offer you playing hints and comments at each hole.

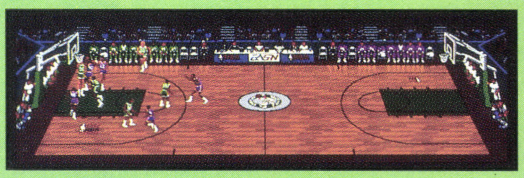


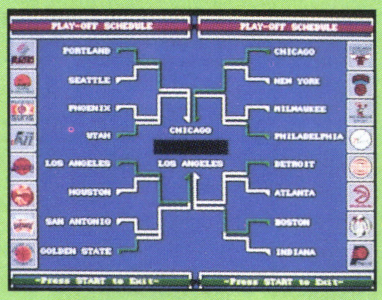
Lakers vs. Celtics and the NBA Playoffs

ELECTRONIC ARTS

January/February 1992 ($59.95)

To round things out, EA will also bring one of the top basketball games to the Super NES. The game features the full player roster from the 1990-1991 season with the complete stats for each player. And the actual 1991 All-Star teams from each conference are included.





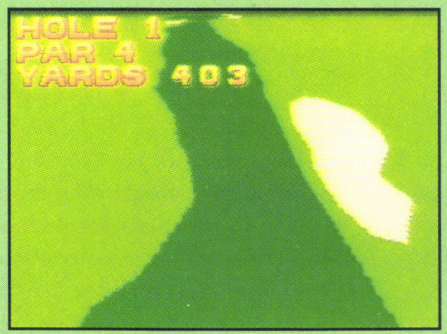


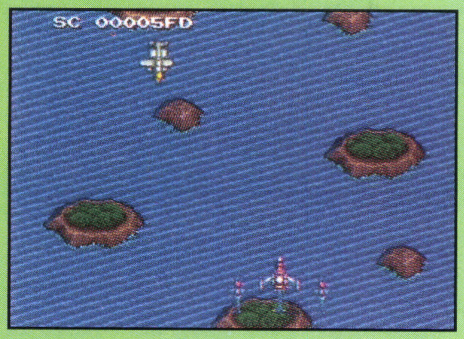
Hole in One Golf

HAL AMERICA

(NA)

Hal America's first entry for the Super NES is this golf game. It includes six modes of play to select, including a "memory play" that allows you to watch a replay of hole-in-ones, eagles or albatrosses. You can also select up to four players and three levels of difficulty and, in multiplayer mode, if you're in stroke play, you can set your handicap.

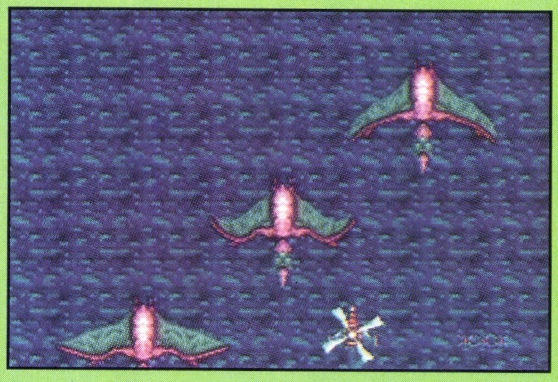




D-Force

ASMIK

November 1991 ($59.99)

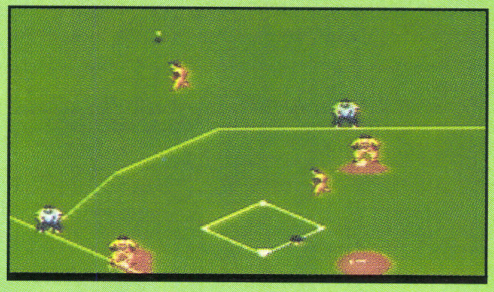


A rich and powerful oil baron in the Middle East has started a war with the world. At the controls of a U.S. nuclear helicopter, you must navigate the gunship through six countries and ten levels of play to finally reach the enemies' headquarters. The enemy aircraft fly toward you at different altitudes. Using the top left and right button you can reach the top height of 15,000 feet or skim the ground at a low 50 feet to knock them out of the sky.

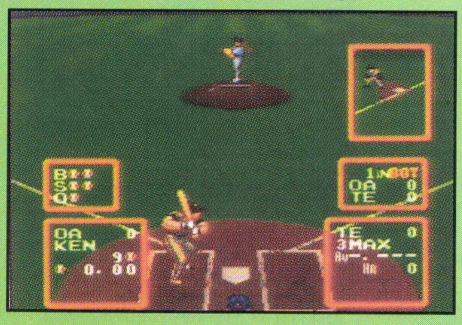
Super Baseball Simulator 1.000

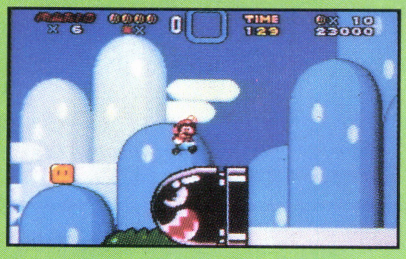
CULTURE BRAIN

October 1991 (tentative) ($59.95)



While not entirely realistic, *Super Baseball Simulator 1.000* could be called the most involved baseball game to date. Six players can compete in a 5-to-165-game season that can go from one to nine innings. There are 24 teams to choose from with 432 players involved in the action. Complete player and team stats are kept during the year that can be played in six franchise stadiums. An auto setting lets you edit your original team and then lets the computer play the game. In the manager mode, the manager will send in instructions to the players. You can edit everything about your team and players, right down to the team colors. There are three levels of playing difficulty, with 39 different ultra plays (20 pitches, 15 batting and four fielding).





Super Mario World

NINTENDO OF AMERICA

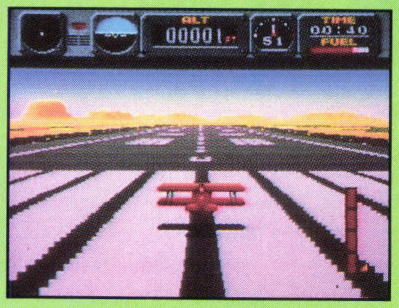
Packaged with the SNES

Mario's back as he battles new foes in the largest of all *Mario* games. There are eight worlds and over 96 levels in all. In possibly the best of the *Super Mario* series, there are new weapons and modes of attack. The game is so big and involved, it's possible to find new paths and items each time you play.

Pilot Wings

NINTENDO OF AMERICA

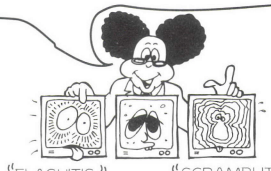
September 1991 ($49.95)



This is one of best (if not the best) and most innovative games to come along in a while. You've entered the world's most exclusive flight school, where you must master the basics of the four methods of flight before you can earn your wings. There's sky diving, flying and landing a biplane and testing an experimental rocket pack and a hang glider. The final test comes after you receive your wings, however, as you pilot a chopper and command a rescue mission.

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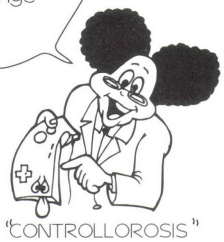


FIX-A-SYSTEM PLUS



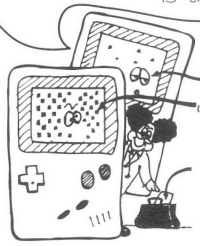
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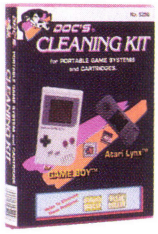
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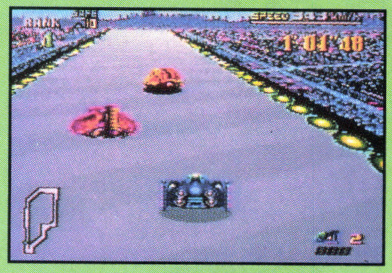
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CIRCLE #132 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

F-Zero

NINTENDO OF AMERICA

September 1991 ($49.95)



Starting off as a rookie F-Zero pilot, you can choose from four hi-tech, high-speed Hovercrafts as you battle it out on seven courses in this futuristic racing game. Each Hovercraft has its own characteristics, and there are three skill levels.



SimCity

NINTENDO OF AMERICA

September 1991 ($49.95)

This video-game version of the popular computer game will let you try your luck at city planning. You can build your city in over 1,000 possible sites, with your choice of possible zoning options and transportation. You can add airports, seaports, stadiums and, if you're lucky, even an amusement park. The game has everything from taxes to floods, and you can also test your skills as a mayor.

Zelda III

NINTENDO OF AMERICA

September 1991 ($49.95)

The adventures of Link and Princess Zelda continue as they both return to the fantasy land of Hydrule. In this adventure, Link will face gigantic monsters, evade hidden traps and solve intricate puzzles.

Gradius III

KONAMI

September 1991 ($49.95)

After generations of germ-free living, the gentle Gradians were cured of Bacterlon's curse, or so they thought. Bacterlon is on the rampage once again, destroying Gradius and the surrounding planets. Control your M.A.X. starship through ten levels of play to see if you can stop Bacterlon's reign of terror.





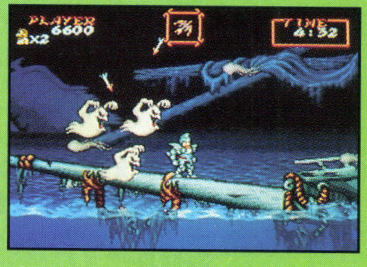


Super Ghouls and Ghosts

CAPCOM

December 1991 ($59.95)

Arthur, the boldest bladesman alive, is on a quest. He must save the lovely Princess Guenevere from the clutches of the reeking ruler of the forbidden land, King Lucifer. This game features new weapons, a crossbow and four spellbinding quests, among other things.



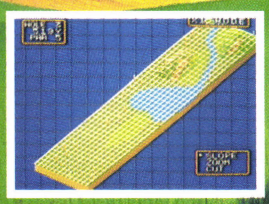
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- Lots of ways to play - One to four players, Stroke, Match, and Tournament Play, or head-to-head against the Hal Pro.
- Each play mode has Amateur, Single and Professional difficulty levels, plus Handicap option.
- Practice mode lets you work on technique.
- A Hole in One, Eagle, or Albatross earns you a password that will let you replay your shot on any Hole in One cartridge for your friends!

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CIRCLE #133 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

U.N. Squadron

CAPCOM

November 1991 ($59.95)



This translation from the arcade game transforms you into one of three members of the finest fighter squadron ever—UN Squadron. Your mission is to stop the relentless mercenary force that now controls most of the country Aslon and put an end to the arms dealers—known as Project 4—that supply them.





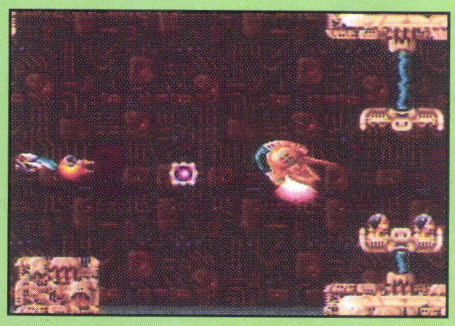
Final Fight

CAPCOM

October 1991 ($59.95)

"Welcome to Metro City, Crime Capital of the World." That's what the signs greeting visitors along the roadways say. But one man, an ex-street fighter and current Metro City mayor named Mike Haggar, plans to change that. Unfortunately, the leader of the Mad Gear Gang (which controls the city) has different ideas. He's kidnapped Mike Haggar's daughter just to prove a point. Nothing will stop Mike Haggar from cleaning up the town. This is a one-player version of the arcade hit.



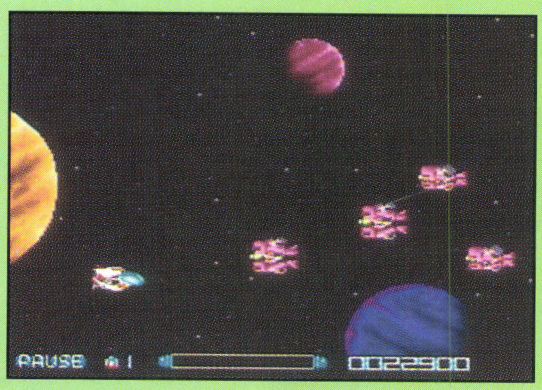


R-Type II

IREM

October 1991 ($69.95)

For all you *R-Type* lovers out there, IREM will be releasing *R-Type II* for the SNES. This time the BYDO empire is back, bigger and stronger than ever. And you're mankind's only hope as you battle it out at the controls of the infamous R-9. You can select from up to four levels of difficulty, but victory isn't truly yours until you defeat the pro difficulty level.



Super Play Action Football

NINTENDO OF AMERICA

September 1991 ($49.95)

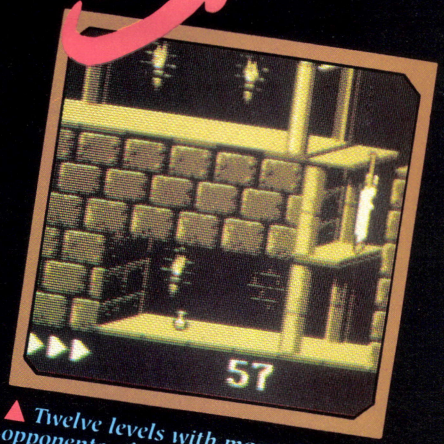
Players can choose from 28 actual NFL teams to play or try the college ranks as they go for the Super Bowl or National title. There's even a peewee league to offer some comic relief if your other team isn't doing so well.

SHARPEN Your Skills

Can you hack it? As the imprisoned young adventurer who has just managed to escape your cell in the palace dungeons, you have only 60 minutes to make your way to the top of the palace and rescue the beautiful princess from a forced marriage with Jaffar the evil tyrant who has stolen her father's throne.

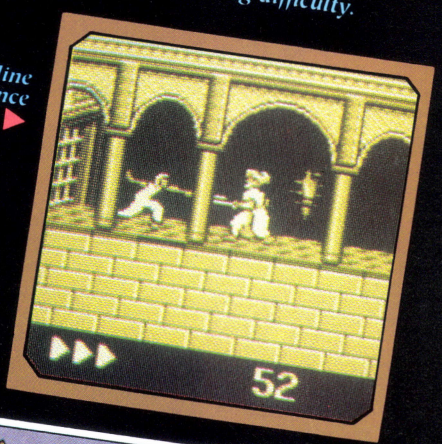
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SEGA GENESIS

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CIRCLE #135 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

ONLINE WITH SIERRA

The Software Giant Goes on a Telecommunications Quest!

BY ARNIE KATZ & BILL KUNKEL

Ken Williams didn't get to the top of the entertainment-software heap by being a stick-in-the-mud. How many other game publishers, for example, would have fooled around with a formula as successful as Sierra's *King's Quest* series? While competitors like Infocom and Scott Adams rode once-successful game formulas into the ground, Sierra continually fine-tuned its basic adventure-game engine, questing (so to speak) after the perfect interface. And when the rest of the industry was devoting its energies to churning out games for the then-dominant Commodore 64 in the mid-'80s, following the collapse of the video-game market, Sierra's president stunned insiders with the announcement that it was leaving the 8-bit computer world behind in order to concentrate exclusively on the new generation of 16-bit systems.

It makes sense, therefore, that Sierra would be the first game publisher to step into the burgeoning telecommunications universe, with a bold, new concept dubbed The Sierra Network. The Sierra Network (TSN), a subsidiary of Sierra On-Line, Inc., will concentrate on developing, marketing and delivering games to a multisystem, online audience.

"This is the culmination of a two-year research project to explore the possibility of creating games similar to those which we publish now, where the game actually spans multiple computers," says Sierra's founder, Ken Williams. "This would allow players to encounter each other during game play, sharing a common experience."

TSN "was a dream of Ken's," according to Mike Thornton, vice-president of operations for TSN. A former consultant on network design with 25 years in the telecommunications business, Mike joined Sierra in February 1991 in order to shepherd the project to completion. The idea for an online gaming network had been kicking around at Sierra for about four years, but it got serious roughly two years ago. Since then, development of TSN has consumed approximately 30,000 man hours for programming, design and strategy sessions, and 50,000 man-hours were spent testing the system.

Testing the System

"Since October of 1990," Ken Williams reports, "we have been conducting a test in the Los Angeles area involving about 1,000 users. Although the test only consisted of board and card games, it yielded amazing results. The idea of being able to find good chess and bridge partners anytime you want without leaving home really caught on. Many of our testers had never touched a computer before, but were suddenly averaging 20 hours per week *and more* on TSN."

Testing the new system was a major undertaking. TSN's initial "out-of-house" test involved 36-48 senior citizens in Oakland and helped debunk the theory that older citizens will always be hostile to high-tech. "We chose that group just *because* of the conventional wisdom," says Thornton, who reports, "Seniors are [now] among our best customers."

An expanded test kicked off in August 1990 among 400-500 Sierra customers in Southern California. "The first version was really buggy," Thornton admits. "It was unusual for anyone to actually get to finish a game until October. After that, it really began to solidify. The first host for the network is now extremely reliable."

Sierra continued to improve the software's usability and reliability until it worked smoothly and dependably. This test ended June 1, 1991—when the system officially opened for business.

Interestingly enough, TSN was originally a "skunkworks" project, that is, it was a secret even within the company. "We didn't want to de-focus our own programmers," Thornton explains. Sierra was afraid that if the technical people at Sierra learned of the project, everyone would want in, which could have hurt the development of ongoing projects.

Interfacing With the System

"TSN represents breakthroughs in a number of areas," notes Ken Williams. "The toughest battle was figuring out

how to connect players to each other in a low-cost manner. Our goal was to charge a flat monthly rate, rather than some hourly rate, preferably under $10 per month. We were able to get costs down to where the service can be delivered at $11.95 per month (unlimited usage).

"The second challenge was in hiding technology. Although TSN is enormously complex, I wanted a product my grandmother could use. No user IDs, passwords, pull-down menus, etc. We have plenty of seniors now using the service.

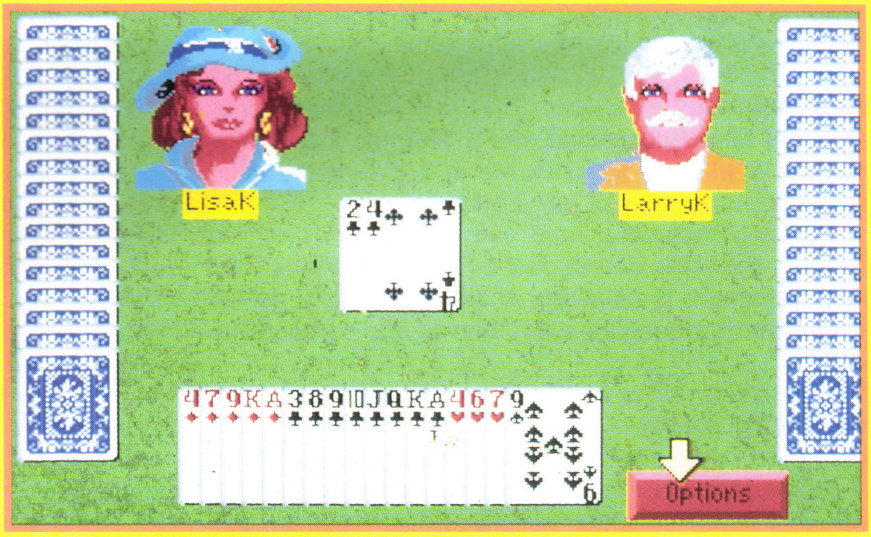
"Lastly, I wanted a *responsive* system that felt and looked just as good as the single-player entertainment currently available. We met this goal and even have a version of our top-selling flight simulator, *Red Baron,* running on TSN."

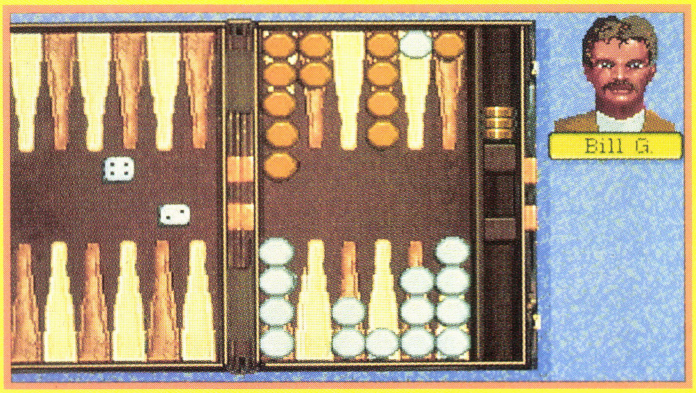
Development of an interface can be a brain-busting problem, but Sierra is happy with the results of its search for a totally transparent system.

"If you can use a mouse, you can use TSN," was how Mike Thornton put it. With the software now in use, all the user does is type "TSN" and then point and click the play button when it appears, and he or she will be online with Sierra. The graphic interface is designed to facilitate ease of use, with large on-screen buttons (for weak eyes), on-screen text in large-size type and the complete elimination of passwords and codes.

Marketing and Organizing the System

Several plans are already in operation to assist Sierra in selling its latest brainchild. Brochures including sign-up cards are being stuffed into all Sierra software packages, and a joint promotion with Sprint, which will enclose TSN literature with Sprint billings to ten million customers, is already being inaugurated.





The Sierra Network (TSN), a subsidiary of Sierra On-Line, Inc., will concentrate on developing, marketing and delivering games to a multisystem, online audience.

The general philosophy of TSN is similar to that of cable operators. TSN will have a basic service and later introduce a selection of optional add-ons for additional fees. Current basic service includes: three card games (hearts, cribbage, bridge); three board games (checkers, chess, backgammon); and a message board (with personal and general messages).

Players can chat during play, and any subscriber who would rather watch than compete can ask any participant in a current game if they can watch. If permission is received, the gamer sees an "eye" in the corner of the screen to alert them that someone is watching over their shoulder.

TSN offers no solitaire play, only head to head. "This is something you can't do elsewhere," explains Mike Thornton. "If you want to play chess solitaire, it makes sense to simply buy a program, like *Chessmaster 2100,* that allows this."

A forthcoming expansion of E-Mail Service includes plans to offer three sizes of mailboxes: 10-letter capacity ($3 per month); 50-letter capacity ($5 per month) and; 100-letter capacity ($10 per month). Capacities refer to how many messages these boxes can hold at one time. Sierra will provide users paying the hourly rate a free 10-letter mailbox as part of the basic monthly fee.

Paying for the System

Sierra offers two payment plans for interested users. The flat rate of $11.95 per month is now available in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. This entitles the user to an unlimited number of log-ons and full 24-hour access to TSN. This service is only available in areas in which there are 300-400 TSN users. Sierra can then set up a concentrator, or host computer, for that area and pass the savings along to users in the form of this flat rate offer.

Otherwise, an hourly rate is used. The user pays a $4.95 per month fee, plus $2 an hour between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. and $7 all other times. "We got such a good price from Sprint because of TSN's evening orientation," Thornton explained. This rate is currently available outside California and will stay in force for those who don't live in an area served by a concentrator.

When the user signs on, they go to the waiting room. Those currently online are identified by clickable boxes. Clicking on a box calls up a profile of that person, which details possible interests. The user can then contact that person and send an offer to play.

Once the service expands, there will be multiple waiting rooms, arranged like a private club. This will allow all who want to play, say, bridge, to go to a waiting room for bridge players. This would make it easier to match up gamers who want to play the same game.

Players are grouped around host computers—TSN uses 486-based PCs—and it will be possible to play someone who is connected with a different host. Unlimited users will pay an extra fee of $2 an hour, while hourly rate users will not pay anything extra.

It's likely that other card and board games will be added to the basic service in the forseeable future. One likely candidate is pinochle. Another is Reversi, which Mike Thornton describes as "one of my personal favorites."

When a user signs on, they can create an "electronic bust" of themselves. Assembled from a bank of choices and driven by menu, this depiction can be accurate or, of course, it could be quite fanciful. During game play, the other player sees this picture of their opponent facing them across the table.

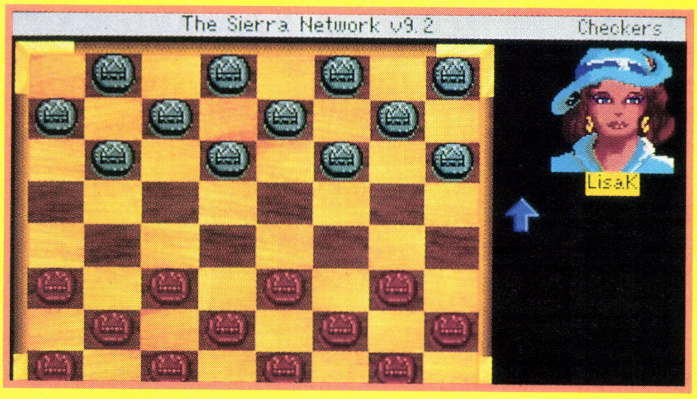
TSN is developing. When perfected they'll be added to TSN as pay-basis add-ons.

A projected "sketch" of SierraLand includes a little red schoolhouse that represents the Electronic Chalkboard team-homework feature. A windmill signals the presence of a wild miniature golf course, and there are bumper boats over by the picturesque river. A stone fence marks the perimeters of a paintball play area and the joystick-shaped Wilco's Arcade offers gamers multiplayer sessions with such Sierra action hits as *Red Baron*, *Stellar 7*, *Astro Chicken* and others. The Sculpture Garden is an aesthetic delight; users can marvel at the work of fellow TSN members or even create their own, alone or with friends. The Hard Disk Cafe is the local hangout, and TV station KFUN provides members with a chance to observe or join in a wild, ongoing quiz show that is billed as being "definitely NOT for adults!"

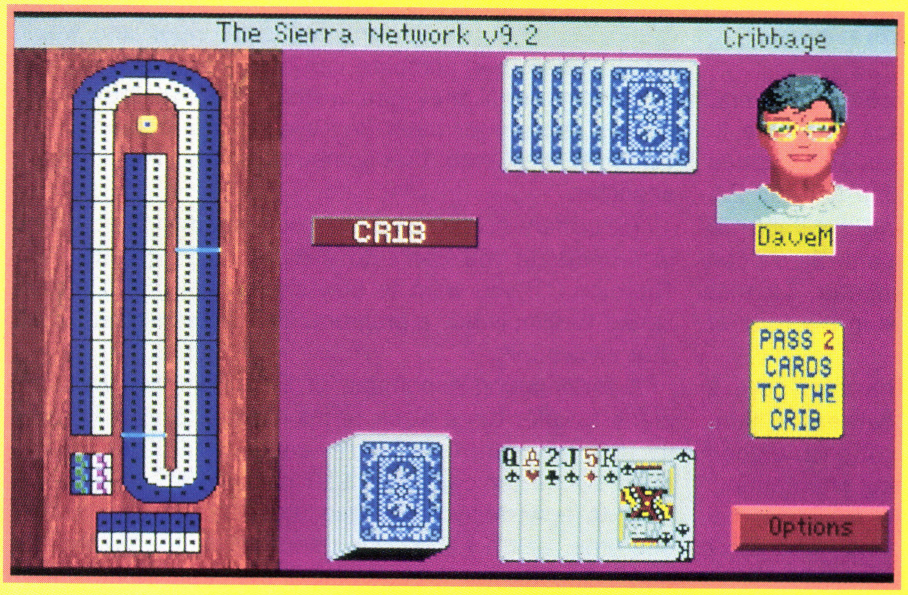
LarryLand, on the other hand, will offer users a more grown-up environment, including a video casino, the Oasis Disco, the Yak 'n' Yuk Comedy Club, a sports arena, Lefty's Bar, Quiki-Mart and Hotel (complete with an outdoor Jacuzzi if you stay in the penthouse). LarryLand is, of course, based on the adventures of Leisure Suit Larry, and its TV station KTSN features Larry himself in his own show.

LarryLand and SierraLand

LarryLand and SierraLand are graphic environments, sort of electronic-theme parks, which



The Sierra Network has been available in California since June 1 and will expand to the rest of the country over the next 12 months.



"The sky is the limit for LarryLand and SierraLand," says Thornton. He also believes that, in time, multiplayer adventures and role-playing entertainments could become part of the system. He admits, however, that adventures online "are still quite a way off."

Meanwhile, Ken Williams' original vision of a multisystem online gaming network continues to grow. "I see TSN as being closest to how people think of interactive cable television," Ken says. "There is a basic subscriber fee, which includes unlimited access to the core service consisting of popular board and card games. By Christmas we hope to have SierraLand and LarryLand available—they are best described as cyberspace-based theme parks for children and adults, respectively.

TSN has been available in most of California since June 1 and will expand to the rest of the country over the next 12 months.

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Ikari War II	4/12
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Imp Mission II	18/29
Ind Jns Lst Crsd	22/39
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Karate Kid	4/12
Karnov	6/12
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Track/Field II	4/12
*Trsure Mstr	22/39
Trick Shooting	10/22
*Trog	22/39
Trojan	4/12
Twin Cobra	14/24
Twin Eagle	18/29
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*Ult Journey	24/39
*Ult Lge Soccer	22/39
*Ult Stuntman	22/39
Ultima	14/29
Ultima II	22/44
*Unchrtd Wtrs	22/39
*Uninvited	26/44
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Urbn Chmpn	8/14
Vegas Dreams	34/54
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Vindicators	8/14
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*War vs Drugs	24/39
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W Grtsky Hcky	24/39
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Wheel /Fortune	16/29
Wheel /Frtn Fam	26/42
Wheel /Frtn Jr	24/39
*Where's Waldo	24/39
Whomp'em	24/39
Wild Gunman	8/14
Willow	10/19
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Winter Games	3/7
Wizardry	24/39
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DESTINATION ARCADIA

For the last two years or so we have written *Destination Arcadia* from the standpoint of what the game was about and what we felt about the games covered that month. Well, for this month's *Destination Arcadia* we decided to do something a little different. Instead of looking at a game after it's been finished and released, we'll take a look at how the game is conceived and the processes that are involved to get a game out the doors and into the arcades. And what better game to take a look at than the one based on this summer's biggest blockbuster movie, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*.

The Pinball

The Steps:

1. Although not always required, it does help to read the script of the movie before work is started. This will sometimes give the designer an idea not thought of previously.



2. The designer begins working on concepts for the pinball on a drafting table. The original drawings are done to full scale. The key here is not only to do the top of the game but the bottom as well. All kick holes, bumpers and drop targets can be many times larger under the playfield than on top. So the key to whether something will fit on top is whether it will fit underneath.

3. Once the logistics are worked out on paper, it's time to see what happens on the playfield. Everything is transferred to a plain board, called a white wood.

4. A few solenoids are added, as well as the flippers, to give the designers a better feel for the game.

5. The artist will begin preliminary designs of what he thinks the game is based on, given the concepts and designs given him. In the case of a movie, the art must be approved by the studio, as well as actors, if likenesses of them are used.

6. At this stage of the game, the designer presents the budget for the game to management, who will trash all special gadgets and items they think are too expensive. Knowing this, the designer will always put more into the pinball in hopes of keeping what he or she really wants in the game.





Top (from left to right): *T2* video-game designers Jack Haeger, John Vogel, George Petro, Warren Davis, Bill Dabelstein and Tim Coman (kneeling). Left: *T2* pinball designers Steve Ritchie, Dwight Sullivan and Carl Biagi.

7. If all goes well, the cabinet and playfield art will be completed and approved. When dealing with a movie studio, this can sometimes take a long time. In some cases, if the pinball is based on a movie, the artist will be required to create concepts that are found in the movie without giving the plot away, as was the case with *T2*. This can be extremely difficult sometimes.

8. At this point, all the major items to be used in the pinball are worked on and created by the engineers. This also covers how the pieces are going to be constructed and with what materials. Examples from *T2* include the gun grip (instead of plastic, which would have been less expensive, die-cast metal was used), the skull and the future-wars aircraft. The software is then put into full swing.

Software for a pinball isn't really implemented until two to three months after the first drawings are made. The program is essentially written some 60 different times to allow for the different settings (how many coins for a credit, whether to allow for an extra ball or credit points, whether certain targets will light

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up at the beginning of each ball and/or how many balls to allow for a credit) that an operator can choose from when the game is at the arcade.

9. Hopefully, the back glass has also arrived, and a freelance sculptor begins molding the odd, 3-D pieces so they can be mass-produced.

10. Over the last six to seven months the rough sound and music of the game should have been worked on, and it's at this point that everything is slowly merged together. This takes a lot of coordination between the sound and music programmers so that each sound will reach a climax or higher level of intensity as the different shots and cycles are made. For the *T2* pinball, that also meant having a soundtrack system set up on location so that Arnold Schwarzenegger could read a script that contained phrases such as "extra ball."

11. Now come the judgement calls for the designer: what shots or ramps to keep, which ones really don't give the pinball the correct feel and deciding whether a new technology breaks the unwritten laws of pinball, such as having the flippers shut down after five to ten minutes of play during a ball. This is also the time the designer should ask himself, "Where is the game going?" and when ideas from the last couple of months are intermixed or refined to see which ones work best together.

12. Now comes time for the hand-built games to be made. This can take weeks as personnel wait for special parts to be made and delivered. Testing and final changes also begin here.

13. After all parts have come in, the game is shipped to test sites located all over the world. The programmers make special trips to monitor the game's progress and audit the game's performance. Final adjustments are made based on their observations, as well as the suggestions of the arcade operators and the players themselves.

14. Finally, after all adjustments have been made, the game is mass-produced and sent to the various distributors located all over the world. This is where your local arcade owner might see a game for the very first time.

The Players:

Steve Ritchie
Designer
Dwight Sullivan
Software
Carl Biagi
Mechanical Engineer
Doug Watson
Art
Chris Granner
Music/Sound
John Vogel
Video graphics (dot matrix)

The Video Game

The Steps:

1. In the case of the *T2* video game, the main requirement was for the potential programming team to fly to California to read the script and see if it would make a good video game. This occurred back on July 10, 1990.

For the reading of the script, each person was placed at their own desk without pen and paper for notes. There was a guard on duty watching them, and the script could not be discussed between themselves while they were there. It was best described as a test being taken in high school.







Left: Jack Haeger reviewing footage from the movie. Below left: Designer Steve Ritchie works on the pinball's layout. Below right: John Vogel prepares the endoskeleton for taping.

2. Once back in Chicago and at the hotel, different aspects were dealt with, including what art systems and other equipment would be needed.

3. The storyboards were drawn.

4. When the storyboards were completed, the team had to fly back to California to show them to James Cameron.

5. As the presentation went on, the storyboards were updated, and James Cameron offered many ideas. It was at this point that he gave the team full access and cooperation.

6. Now came the time to decide the breaking points and what parts of the movie would be used in the game to set the pace and action.

7. The process was set into motion when the mechanical engineer started to develop the gun and other pieces. The art for the cabinet and marquees began.

8. Using a video camera, they filmed the action and background on-site. This is also where they filmed the actors as the movie was being filmed.

9. As different segments were completed, film was sent back to Chicago where the digitized characters were placed in the backgrounds, and action was programmed into the game.

10. Again, there is little sound, which is finished last.

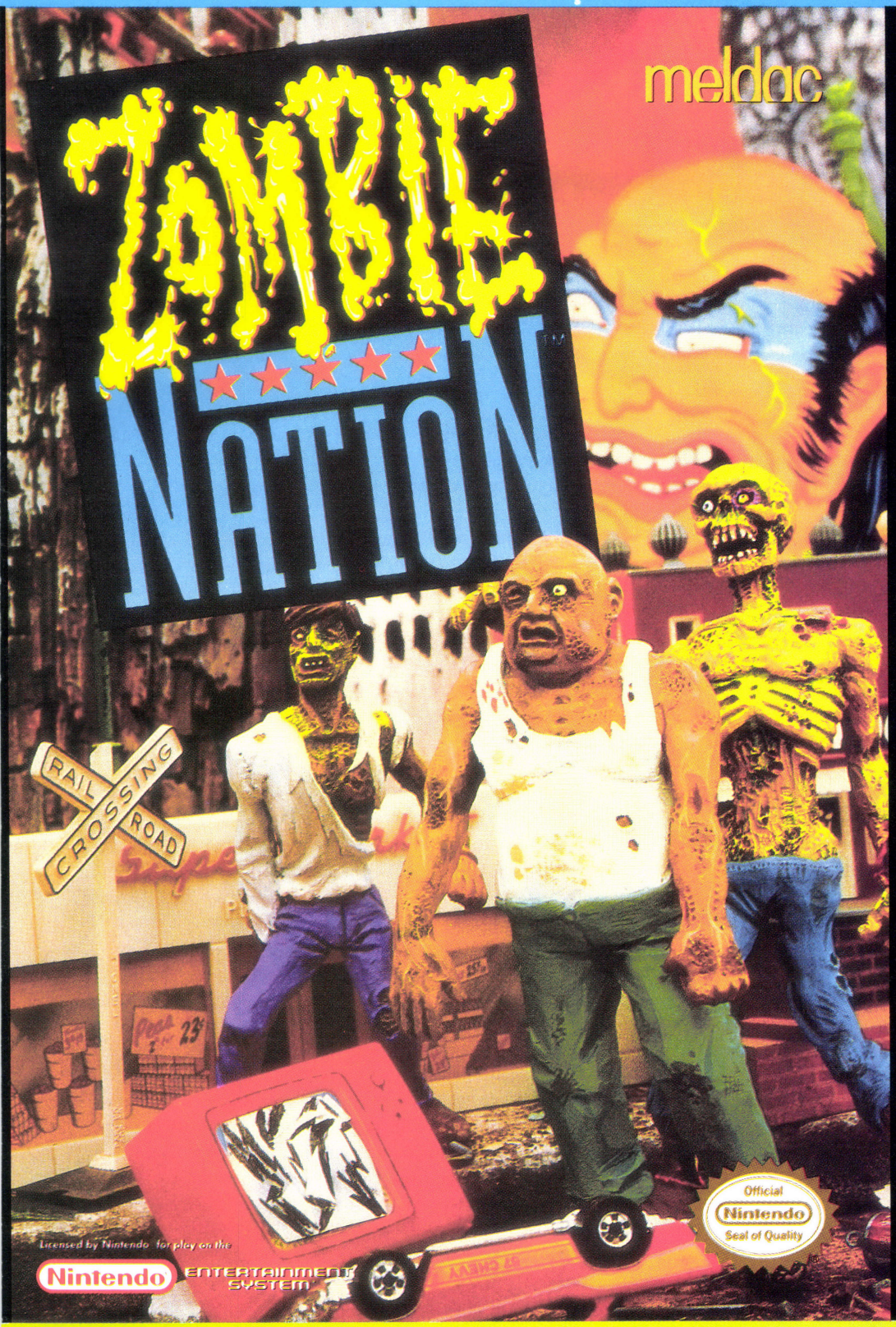
11. When the preliminary game is complete, it will be sent to the arcades for testing. This is where the programmers can learn if the game is too easy, too difficult, where the "walls" are for players, etc. The final "extra settings" are also programmed into the game.

12. Once this is complete, the game will be ready for mass production and will be sent to the distributors.

The Players:

George Petro
Project Leader and Programmer
Jack Haeger
Project Leader and Art
John Vogel
Art
Tim Coman
Art
Warren Davis
Programmer
Chris Granner
Sound

THE ZOMBIES ARE COMING!!!!



By I. C. GOOLS, Times Staff Writer

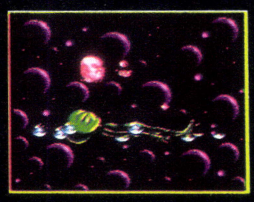
NEW YORK--What appeared to be a harmless meteorite crashing in the Nevada desert has turned out to be Darc Seed, an evil alien creature with horrible powers. By shooting strange rays, Darc Seed has turned the helpless nation into zombie slaves.

Mayor Heminhaw immediately called an emergency press conference where he read the following prepared statement. "I um, er,ah, I am doing everything, ah, er, humanly possible to see to it that ah, this situation er, um, this terrible situation ah, comes to a ah, ahem, a swift and er, um, um, a swift and um, satisfactory close.



Ground Shaking NES Action

Zombie Nation is a ground shaking action/shooting game for the NES. The object of the game is to wreak total destruction on everything you see (it's a dark and dirty job, but somebody's got to do it). Meanwhile, you need to rescue as many zombie hostages as you can in order to gain enough strength for the ultimate showdown with Darc Seed (he's toast!).



Devastating Graphics and Pounding Sound

Zombie Nation's graphics are so devastatingly realistic you'll almost be tempted not to demolish them (yeah right!). And the relentlessly pounding sound effects will make you feel like you're right in the middle of the action hammering away at skyscrapers, mountains, and everything else that crosses your path. So don't just stand there like a Zombie, get your copy now!

Distributed by Meldac of America, Inc. 1801Century Park East Suite 2210, Los Angeles, CA. 90067 (213) 286-7040

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ZOMBIE ★ NATION

CIRCLE #138 ON READER SERVICE CARD.



COMPUTER GAMING PUSHES QUALITY

The ear-piercing screech you hear is the sound of the computer-entertainment juggernaut shifting gears. The software publishers have finally faced the need to redefine and retarget their business to avoid an even more penetrating sound—the cries of anguished retailers. Sales were bad in 1990, and they didn't improve as much as hoped during the first half of this year. Store owners who have suffered through this spell of sluggish sales won't stand for much more time-marking.

The summer edition of the biannual showcase of super software, the Consumer Electronics Show (SCES), provided great reassurance for chain store buyers and, ultimately, for the computer-gaming community. With only a very few exceptions, disk-based publishers have taken fresh stock of their market position, and they are making major moves to improve their own sales and make computer gaming the growth category it was through the mid-to-late 1980s.

Two of the most significant trends detected at the SCES speak directly to the widespread feeling that it's time for a new approach to home-computer gaming:

• Less Product

One of the most disturbing things about the computer-gaming business over the last two years has been the way companies were oblivious to the big picture. All too many thought in terms of how many titles they needed to distribute to achieve their sales goals rather than about how many titles the market could actually absorb in total.

• More Brain Games

The second golden age of video gaming forced many executives to confront greed and envy. Quite a few computer-software makers chased those Nintendo dollars by offering frenetic shooters. Not only is high speed action technically difficult on IBM PC machines, but it turned out that relatively few computerists wanted these hand-eye workouts. On average, computer owners are more than a decade older than video gamers, and their reflexes just aren't up to contests constructed to challenge teenage mutant arcade aces.

by Arnie Katz, Bill Kunkel and Joyce Worley

CD Hardware Watch

CD, or multimedia, as it is also called, still looks like the next big thing in electronic gaming. Computer-hardware manufacturers, like their video-game counterparts, are readying systems for retail, and just about every software publisher and development house is trying to get experience in making interactive CD entertainment.

Although the F.M. Towns computer, an IBM PC-compatible machine with a CD-ROM drive, is not going toward expanding its sales territory beyond Japan, Fujisanki's decision to underwrite high-quality software development has done a lot for the industry. Any participating developer is virtually guaranteed a profit, so many used the Towns as the doorway to multimedia.

This is building a community of CD-development experts as well as the start of a game library for IBM PC computers that *will* offer CD-ROM drives in the U.S. Conversion to CD formats is fairly easy, so many titles coming for the TurboGrafx CD, Play Station, CDTV and Sega's forthcoming peripheral for its Genesis will also reach computer-based CD systems.

Commodore announced that Amiga owners won't be left out in the cold now that its CDTV "black box" machine is rolling into the market. The West Chester, Pennsylvania, firm will start selling a CD-ROM drive for the Amiga 500 that is compatible with CDTV. The anticipated list price is around $450.

System Shuffle

Now that eight-bit has given up the ghost, we're down to three major computer systems: IBM PC, Amiga and Macintosh. If you don't own one of these three, don't expect to see much new software. The Atari ST is still a slight exception, but the number of ST programs coming from Europe has slowed to a trickle, and stateside development on this machine is virtually nonexistent in the computer-entertainment segment.

Today, primary development for most games takes place on the IBM PC. Games for the IBM and compatible clones are now 80% of total computer-entertainment volume, and that is likely to increase a few more percentage points by the end of this year. A heartening sign for software publishers is the excellent growth in IBM PC game sales during the first half of 1991.

The game companies love the Amiga, but they don't respect it. No machine draws stronger raves from executives, producers and programmers, yet few outfits push development for it. The

sales-per-title have not kept pace with the expansion of the Amiga audience. Whether this is due to the inroads of piracy or some inherent quirk in Amiga users' buying habits is uncertain, but the result is that few publishers believe they can earn enough with an Amiga edition to justify the investment in time and money to make software for it.

There will be quite a few new games for the Amiga, despite this gloomy assessment, for two main reasons:

• European Development

The Amiga is more important in England and on the continent than here in the United States. When a stateside publisher buys a title from overseas, there's usually an Amiga edition done or at least in the works. Most, though not all, U. S. companies generally decide to issue the Amiga disk, since the negligible investment almost guarantees a profit.

• Aesthetics

Many games look and play better on the Amiga than on any rival computer. Amiga games are more impressive to chain store buyers at trade shows like CES, and they generate the best-looking screen shots for product packages and reviews in consumer-gaming magazines. Some publishers like to introduce a game on the Amiga before bringing it to the bread-and-butter IBM PC audience.

The Macintosh is still not the apple of the industry's eye. Audience growth is pretty good at this point, thanks to the success of the Classic and the LC, but the entertainment market has proven elusive. Macintosh games require separate programming, which raises the cost of developing anything on that system. Still, companies are watching hardware sales, mindful of the occasional hits like *Shanghai* and *Tetris*, which have had excellent volume in the past. Few are ready to commit to all-out support for the Macintosh at this juncture, but putting another million LCs into American homes could whip up plenty of enthusiasm.

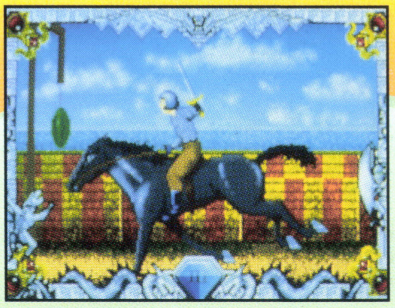
Son of Sequel Mania!

The sequel to VG&CE's report on the Winter Consumer Electronics Show is that sequels are going to be more important than ever this fall and winter. Follow-up titles look like a life preserver in the current, unsettled retailing environment. Marketing-oriented executives feel safest when they have something with a track record, like a sequel to a title that has already sold well.

Announced sequels, arranged by type, include:

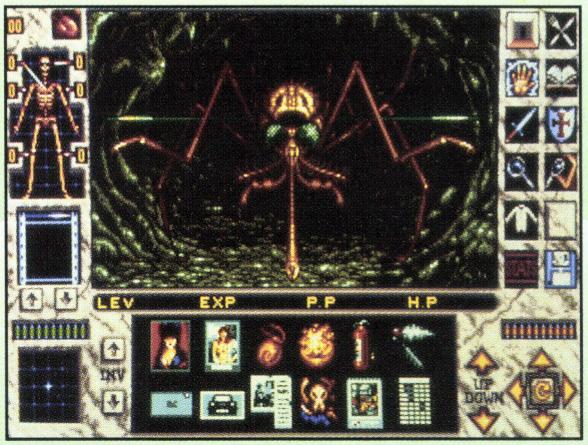
Another chapter of an on-going story. When an adventure or role-playing game (RPG) does well, it's better than even money that more episodes in the same setting can't be far behind.

Ultima VII (Origin Systems/IBM PC, Amiga) finds Lord British opening a new saga after winding up the Avatar trilogy with *Ultima VI.* Much time has passed since the last installment, and the land is beset by troubles and unrest. A new power, the Guardian, comes forward to claim the throne, challenging Lord British's right to rule. The struggle for control will be the central theme of the next three *Ultima* titles, which figure to be a bit less metaphysical than the last group.



Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra combines synchronized, digitized voices with the graphics.

Wizardry: Crusaders of the Dark Savant (Sir-Tech/IBM PC, Amiga, Macintosh) has four beginnings, three of which continue *Bane of the Cosmic Force.* The player can either import characters from the previous game or start fresh. Animated characters in first-person perspective depict four adventuring environments (indoor, outdoor, caves and a mirror world) in VGA or EGA. Point-and-click replaces typing for many actions in this latest version of the popular adventuring system that has already sold 1.7 million copies.



In *Jaws of Cerberous*, the gamer must rescue Elvira, who has been kidnapped.

The first sequel to *Might & Magic* may have disappointed some fans, but *Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra,* (New World Computing/IBM PC) is sure to delight those who liked the first *M&M.* The newest installment of the saga has many improvements in the system, including digitized voices synchronized with the graphics.

Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary (Interplay/IBM PC, Amiga, Macintosh) combines a space-flight simulator with adventure and role-playing elements. There are 35-40 planets, each of which has a mini-adventure.

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (Interplay/IBM PC, Amiga, Macintosh versions to follow) can be played either as a sequel to *LOTR Volume I* or as a stand-alone product. An interesting novelty: just like in the book, the action follows first one fellowship member, then another. In fact, the player may be involved in a confrontation when the scene shifts to another character to create instant cliffhangers.

The world's most gorgeous ghoul, Elvira, is featured in *Jaws of Cerberous* (Accolade/IBM





Ultima VII, by Origin, will revolve around a land power struggle.



Indiana Jones & The Fate of Atlantis, by Lucasfilm Games for the IBM PC, uses a point-and-click control system for easy game play.

PC, Amiga). The player, in the enviable role of Elvira's boyfriend, must rescue the bewitching one, who has been—what else?—kidnapped. The adventure leads the computerist through a graveyard, mausoleum and catacombs, with clues provided by Elvira herself. A more graphics-oriented interface makes the follow-up considerably easier to play than the first title in the series. For example, a human form at the side of the active display provides a visual representation of accumulating hit-point damage to the player's character; the body decays as the wounds get more severe.



Point-and-click control makes *Indiana Jones & The Fate of Atlantis* (Lucasfilm Games/IBM PC) easy to play. In this side-scroller, the player pilots a sub to Atlantis for a thrilling "lost race" adventure.

Les Manley, the hero of *In Search of the King*, returns in another lighthearted mystery, *Les Manley Lost in L.A.* (Accolade/IBM PC). Unlike the parser-driven original, the sequel is strictly point-and-click.

Manley's friend from last year's epic, Helmut Bean, has become a stunt man in Hollywood. When Les goes to Tinsel Town to visit his buddy, he arrives to find that Bean and his girlfriend have become kidnap victims. It's up to Les to rescue the couple. Graphics are based on electronically scanned oil paintings, and the music features such hits as "California Dreaming" and "California Girls."





Les Manley Lost in L.A., by Accolade, has a new redesigned user interface and uses graphics that are based on electronically scanned oil paintings.

A more elaborate version of the same or similar situation. Game design and development is a dynamic process. Sometimes the act of making a game gives the team insights into how they could have done it much better.

Wing Commander II (Origin Systems/IBM PC) should reach stores about the same time as this issue of VG&CE. Even though *Wing Commander* itself is still relatively new, fans of the first-person outer space shooter are definitely going to want the new program. The designer has become much more fluent in the visual language of cut scenes, and the noninteractive sequences of *Wing Commander II* are outstanding animated science fiction.

Speedball II (Konami/IBM PC, by the Bitmap Brothers) is a big improvement over last year's *Speedball*, which appeared under Cinemaware's Spotlight label. The Spotlight version had terrific play action, but the modified overhead view and fine graphics of this year's model make a great future sport even more enjoyable. The sound, including synthesized speech, is also much better this time around. The program rates on-screen athletes for various attributes, and the gamer can allocate special powers prior to the start of a match. Another new factor is injuries, which add realism to this slam-bang sport.





Wing Commander II, by Origin Systems, contains new, outstanding animated sequences.

An extension of an existing idea to new territory. Sometimes, it takes no more than transplanting a theme or play mechanic to a new setting to produce an appealing new game.

Strike Commander (Origin Systems/IBM PC) is not a new chapter in the *Wing Commander* series, but it draws heavily on those two outer space combat flight simulators. The subject this time is air combat in a near future in which the United States has balkanized as a result of international economic and political pressure. Jet jockeys go to war on behalf of corporations, not countries, but the incredible cut scenes, magnificent music and stunning first-person visuals are up to the expectations of *Wing Commander* fanatics.

Nova 9 (Dynamix/IBM PC, Amiga) will offer fans of *Stellar 7* a fresh challenge. It's exciting first-person real-time combat in a science fiction setting. The sound and graphics are at least as good as the revamped *Stellar 7*, making it one of the best-looking computer action games of 1991.

First came *SimCity*, then *SimEarth*. Maxis has decided that bigger is not

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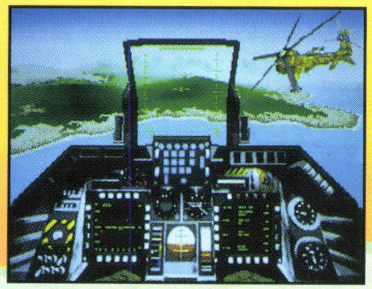
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Strike Commander is an air-combat simulator that takes place in the near future where the U.S. is no longer united.

necessarily better and is thinking small for the third title in this popular line. The next *Sim* sensation will be *SimAnt* (Maxis/IBM PC, Amiga, Macintosh). It's a detailed representation of an ant colony located in the backyard of a typical American home. The computerist will build tunnels, forage for food and battle enemies to keep the ant hill happy.

An update of a product adversely affected by time. Nonelectronic games, if they are good and playable enough, can last for generations. Parker Brothers' *Monopoly* is a perfect example of a game that has changed little except for cleaning up the graphics over the last 50 years. A computer game is lucky if the onrush of technology doesn't make it seem old hat within five years. Pushing classics back up to state-of-the-art is a small but expanding portion of the sequels surge.

Expect many such updates as gaming goes into CD in earnest. *It Came From the Desert* and *Defender of the Crown* (Cinemaware/CDTV) take games that once represented the cutting edge and springboards them to the next level. Both are essentially the same as the disk versions, but they feature lots of speech synthesis and improved graphics. The "old codger" narrator in *Desert* is particularly well-drawn and colorful.

Simulators: Still Flung High

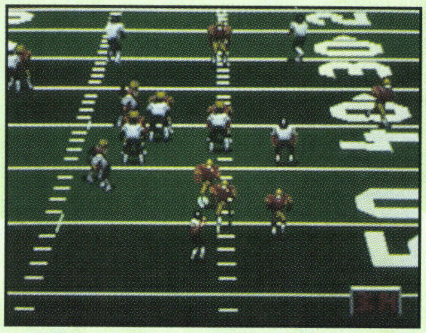
Computer simulators blend elements of action and strategy in a single package that is especially popular with the over-30 crowd. Tons of options, realistic aircraft and real-time excitement have proven to be a successful formula that has powered hit after hit for the last decade.

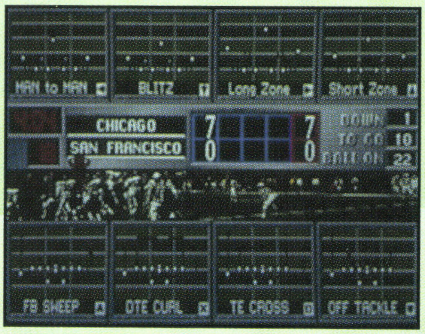
Early flight simulators stressed flying as an end in itself and strove to reproduce the experience of piloting an aircraft as precisely as possible. Now the emphasis has switched to combat and other activities associated with flight.

Chuck Yaeger's Combat Simulator (Electronic Arts/IBM PC) is this year's expansion of the well-liked series that includes two previous titles. The latest *Chuck Yeager* has even better graphics, a smoother interface and lots of fighting in the hostile skies of military history.

Top Gun (Konami/IBM PC) simulates dogfighting action using the fastest and most powerful jet fighters. The Distinctive Software design incorporates footage from the movie as well as sophisticated bit-mapping for the aerial explosions to give *Top Gun* maximum visual impact.

Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte/IBM PC) makes full use of the capabilities of the faster and more powerful 386 processor. Armchair pilots can fly 300-mile missions from Baghdad to Saudi Arabia while enjoying this program's outstanding sound and graphics.





Accolade's Mike Ditka Power Football uses real NFL cities, but fills the squads with fictitious players.

Battlefield 2000 (Data East/IBM PC), which may have a new name by the time it appears, is a tank simulator with many "what if?" scenarios. It features a very realistic cockpit and offers unusual options such as helicopter reconnaissance. The gamer commands a company of four platoons, each with 16 vehicles.

Team Suzuki (Konami/IBM PC) is a realistic motorcycle simulation developed by Britain's Gremlin. Among its main attributes are detailed pit stops and an instant replay feature.

Speaking of Sports

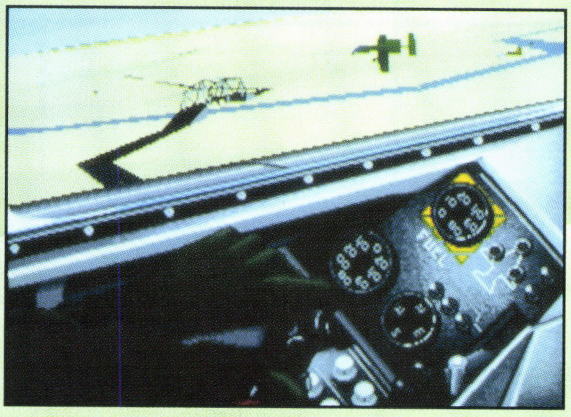
Action and simulation sports games are still riding high, though we probably won't see the latest crop of Olympic-themed titles until at least the first quarter of 1992. A few previously announced titles ran into unexpected delays, and they'll join the new ones described in this section in stores this fall and winter.

MicroSports, publishers of *NFL Pro Football,* plans to have an upgraded edition ready for the fall kickoff. According to President and designer Dave Holt, the new version features much-enhanced graphics to bring the visual appeal up to the level of the statistical accuracy.

MicroLeague Pro Football (MicroLeague Sports Association/-IBM PC), though it has been on



Falcon 3.0, by Spectrum HoloByte, makes full use of the capabilities of the more powerful 386 CPU.



the market for less than a year, is getting a face-lift too. This will be an all-around cleanup, adding some extensive enhancements in the area of the user interface, sound and graphics.



SSI's *Tony LaRussa Baseball*, like *Earl Weaver*, offers both arcade and stat simulation in a single package.



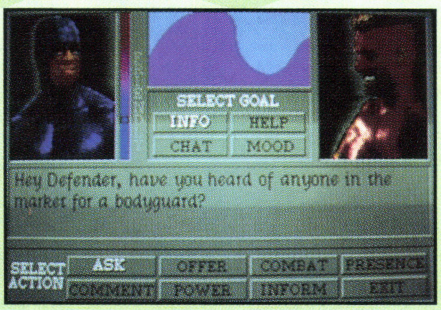
three-title collection (priced at $59.95) that includes *Grand Prix* (Accolade) and *Ferrari Formula One* (Electronic Arts) as well as Capstone's new *Exotic Car Showroom.* The latter is not really a game, but an electronic catalog that provides detailed graphics (super VGA with 644 x 480 resolution) and exhaustive statistics for 15 of the world's most glamorous automobiles.

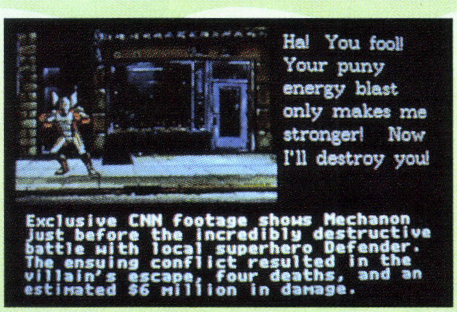
Konami has taken over Cinemaware's *TV Sports* line of statistically influenced action games and will be doing at least two before the end of 1991. *TV Sports: Basketball II* and *TV Sports: Football II* are supposed to take existing kinks out of these titles as well as add even more impressive audio-visuals.

Mike Ditka Power Football (Accolade/IBM PC), with graphics reminiscent of *Monday Night Football,* allows the pigskin fan to play against a team directed by the famous Bears coach or have Mike sit next to you on the bench to provide strategic help. This title employs the real NFL cities but fills the squads with fictitious athletes who are rated in a variety of performance areas, including speed and strength. The compu-coach can play a single game or a full season, draft players for customized teams and select a complete playbook or create fancy formations on the overhead chalkboard.

One of the most unusual products coming to the home-gaming screen is *Tony LaRussa Baseball* (SSI/IBM PC). The graphics are reminiscent of several baseball video games, but content makes it a close cousin of Electronic Arts' *Earl Weaver Baseball II.* Though Strategic Simulations is best-known for its war games and fantasy RPGs, the company also pioneered statistically based sports simulations with the releases *Computer Baseball* and *Computer Football* (circa 1981). *Tony LaRussa,* like *Earl Weaver,* offers both arcade action and stat simulation built into a single software package.

ABC's Wide World of Sports: Boxing (Data East/IBM PC) is a role-playing boxing game with three playing modes: exhibition, career and demo. It portrays the ring action with a combination of overhead and side perspective views, the latter with big figures. The gamer allocates points to various attributes to customize a new boxer and then tries to guide him to the title.





***The Champions*, by Konami, uses a play system that turns the computerist into super hero or heroine.**

Konami's second entry in the future sports category, following the previously mentioned *Speedball II,* is *Rollerbabes.* This is a space age mutation of roller derby as played by women in scanty costumes. Clearly, a must for the serious student of athletics.

Not exactly new is *Super Car Pak* (Capstone/IBM PC). It is a

Pathways to Adventure

Publishers have taken careful note of the tepid response to last year's spate of parser-driven adventures. It looks like action-adventures, with interfaces that feature point-and-click, menus and icons, will be the mainstay of the leading category of computer-entertainment software for the foreseeable future.

Role-playing games (RPGs) are a special type of adventure. After gaining popularity in the nonelectronic gaming world during the 1970s and early 1980s. RPGs, including *Bard's Tale, Ultima, Wizardry* and *Megatraveler,* grow in popularity as better systems let designers construct progressively deeper and more intricate worlds.

Many RPGs have a fantasy theme, and most of the ones that don't are science fiction. Opening a new vista is *The Champions* (Konami/IBM PC), a play system that turns the computerist into super heroes and heroines. Developed under the aegis of Hero Games, which did the original nonelectronic version, *The Champions* is a fresh breeze in a stagnant RPG category, and even those who don't normally read comic books should give it a trial run.

The Terminator (Bethesda Software/IBM PC) marks the entry of the award-winning sports game publisher *(Wayne Gretzky)* into the action-adventure field. It's quite a debut, too, with outstanding graphics and complex action that mirrors the plot of the mid-1980s science-fiction action movie.

Planets Edge: The Point of No Return (New World Computing/IBM PC, Amiga) is a science fiction RPG about four astronauts who find an alien craft. When they go to check it out, Earth disappears, and the craft goes away. Designed by Eric Hymen (*Nuclear War*), the action-strategy adventure allows the player to fight space battles as either real-time encounters or strategic, chesslike engagements. The gamer equips a ship, then visits any of the 60 inhabited worlds.

Rules of Engagement (Mindcraft/IBM PC) is a science fiction RPG sequel that *really* links to its predecessor. Not only can the computerist import characters from *Breach II* , but the two games have connecting sections when loaded simultaneously. *Rules of Engagement* can also be enjoyed without Tom Car-



Riders of Rohan consists of a set of relatively easy action contests derived from the classic trilogy.

bone's earlier action-adventure title. The player can change the personality of the captain, choose a ship, customize it with weapons and shields or even edit the aliens' racial traits.

If you thought *Magic Candle* had better content than technical execution, *Magic Candle II* (Mindcraft/IBM PC) definitely merits playing time. This menu-driven adventure even does away with laborious spell-typing. The player walks the on-screen hero around the town and over land, shown in modified overhead perspective and has role-playing style adventures. Henchmen can be assigned to do individual jobs.

Dragonmaster (Software Toolworks/IBM PC) is fairly standard fantasy action-adventuring, but the implementation is very good. The modified overhead-perspective game is highlighted by plenty of raging combat against an unusually wide variety of malevolent monsters. Visuals are great, but the striking aspect of the graphics is the vivid color palate. This one leaps off the screen at the player, especially when the fighting gets heavy.

The Simpsons Adventure (Konami/IBM PC, Amiga) presents the prime time cartoon family in an action-adventure format geared to young and novice players.

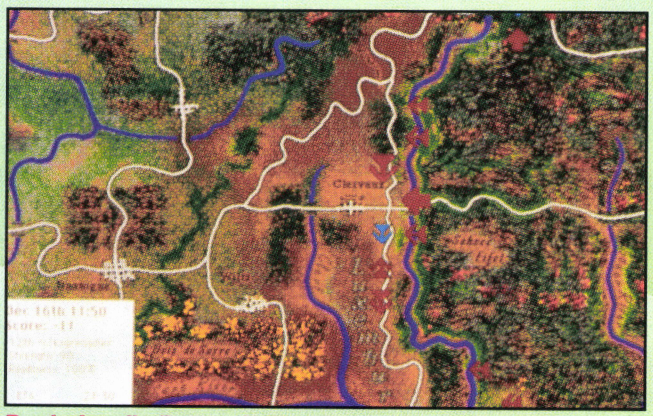


Emphasizing the strategic side of air warfare is Brøderbund's *Ancient Art of War in the Skies.*

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Adventure (Konami/IBM PC) is a joystick-driven side-perspective action-adventure in which the player sees crimes in progress on TV and directs the teams' battle against evil. The turtles start out relatively weak, but gain additional powers and learn more martial arts moves as the quest unfolds.

Spotlight on Strategy

Strategy games have never been more popular in computer gaming than they are today. Both action-strategy contests and the more traditional "alternating-turn" type have proliferated remarkably in the last few years, due mostly to the greater data-crunching ability of contemporary hardware systems. As noted earlier, that trend is sure to continue through this fall and winter.



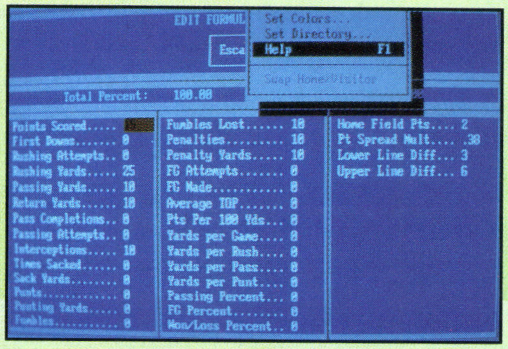
Brøderbund's *Patton Strikes Back* follows the military exploits of the famous general, following the Normandy breakout of *World War II*.



In *Civilization* the object is to take your tribe from the earliest days of civilization to the space era.

Wordtris (Spectrum HoloByte/IBM PC, Amiga, Macintosh) is the latest variation on the kinetic puzzle smash designed by Alexey Pajitnov. Unlike some of the authorized sequels and bold-faced rip-offs we've endured over the last couple of years, *Wordtris* is a genuinely entertaining contest in which the player makes words out of individual letters to make rows disappear. If *Tetris* is one of your favorites, *Wordtris* is a "must buy" when it comes out this fall.

The highest grossing comedy movie of all time has inspired the game *Home Alone* (Capstone/IBM PC, Amiga). Ivan Manley & Associates is developing this title, which is based on a Dave Albers design. The gamer manipulates over 100 objects to create all of the traps needed to stop the intruder in his tracks.



Pro Football Analyst, by Villa Crespo Software, is a handicapping system that displays up to 60 key statistics.

Ultrabots Sanction Earth (Data East/IBM PC) is a strategy game with a three-dimensional, futuristic world as background. The player refits enemy robots with a variety of space age weapons to achieve the goal of creating the power grid needed to defeat the aliens.

Spinnaker Software's decision to withdraw from home-computer entertainment left several of its products hanging. Good news for Tolkien fans is that *Riders of Rohan* (Konami/IBM PC) is finished and ready for release by the NES cartridge maker-turned-computer-software publisher. *Riders of Rohan* consists of a set of relatively easy action contests set within an overall strategic context derived from the classic fantasy trilogy. The combat-oriented game depicts battles in gorgeously drawn close-ups and even lets the game player divide forces in the manner of the



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book and adventure, simultaneously in two separate locations.

The Murry Brothers are preparing a new title in their "Art of War" series. These games combine good military simulation with a high degree of playability that should appeal strongly to those who aren't hard-corps war gamers. The newest in the lineup is *Ancient Art of War in the Skies,* an electronic replication of air combat from prop planes to supersonic jets.

Chris Crawford is returning to the type of game he knows best, the military simulation. Brøderbund will publish *Patton Strikes Back,* based on the exploits of General George S. Patton following the Normandy breakout of World War II, for both the Macintosh and IBM PC computers. Besides a rock-solid historical underpinning, Crawford's forthcoming title boasts simultaneous movement for that true "fog of war" feel and on-line hints by the crusty general himself.

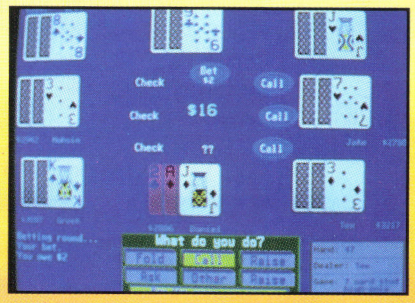
Murder! (U.S. Gold/IBM PC, Amiga) is a two-hour real-time game of detection with 3 million combinations of facts to promote playability. Unusual black-and-white graphics give *Murder* the appropriate 1930s feel, and a streamlined interface keeps the emphasis on the player's deductive ability.

Civilization (MicroProse/IBM PC) uses an interface similar to Sid Meier's earlier hit, *Railroad Tycoon.* The player takes charge of a world, either ours or a hypothetical one. The object is to take your tribe from the earliest days of civilization to the space era while overcoming random events and encounters with historical figures like Ghengis Kahn, Charlemagne or Napoleon.

Villa Crespo Software has three titles that take some of the uncertainty out of gambling. *Pro Football Analyst* (IBM PC) is a handicapping system that displays up to 60 key statistics. Punters input stats manually or download them from the company or subscribe to Villa Crespo's monthly diskette service.

Amarillo Slim's Dealers Choice (Villa Crespo/IBM PC) is an extremely realistic poker simulation, with instruction and practice modes for 28 variations of the popular card game. One special feature is a tournament setting that predeals a set number of hands, then lets both players play the same hands in a split-screen view. While not visually stunning, *Amarillo Slim's Dealers Choice* does have some nice touches, including animated face cards, to keep the play screen interesting.

Stanford Wong's Video Poker (Villa Crespo/IBM PC) is just like the video poker machines found in casinos, except that there are five different video poker games from which to choose. The gamer can play alone or against another human. An on-line tutor instructs the player in winning strategies.





Stanford Wong's Video Poker, by Villa Crespo Software, is just like the video poker machines found in casinos, except that there are five different video poker games from which to choose.

Action: Still Shooting

Despite the move toward more brain games, arcade-style titles aren't ready to disappear. The theory is that even though most computerists prefer entertainment programs, they enjoy a faster-paced title as an occasional treat.

The Taking of Beverly Hills (Capstone/IBM PC) is scheduled to premiere this fall in conjunction with Ken Wahl's first major movie since leaving *Wise Guy.* When urban terrorists make a night raid on an exclusive Beverly Hills shopping district, the player must blend quick wits and fast shooting to keep them from stealing a priceless fresco. Noninteractive "cut scenes" utilize digitized footage from the movie for ultimate realism.

Godfather (U.S. Gold/IBM PC, Amiga) is an action game intended to capitalize on the fame of the Puzo book and the Coppola movie trilogy. It has lots of urban combat, but very little overt connection to the saga of a multi-generational Mafia dynasty. The player must sweep the streets to make them safe for his family. Purists need not despair; U.S. Gold promises a *Godfather* strategy game for next Spring.

Konami has two hot licenses, *The Simpsons* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* in its action lineup. *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Arcade Game* (Konami/IBM PC, Amiga) is the home version of the current coin-op, while *The Simpsons Arcade Game* (Konami/IBM PC, Amiga), also a side-perspective scrolling action contest, is an original design for the home computer.

The Blues Brothers (Titus Software/IBM PC) is a one- or two-player game in which the computerist can become either or both of the musical siblings. The plot has little to do with the classic comedy movie, but there's a lot of climbing and jumping fun as the brothers bounce their way through numerous exploits.

Chip's Challenge (Epyx/IBM PC) could be the first of many games to migrate from the portable universe to the computer gaming screen. This successful Lynx title features 144 levels with programming by Alexey Pajitnov's Bulletproof Software.

The Forecast

The next year won't be easy for computer entertainment and the companies associated with it. The eight-bit systems will reach total collapse with regard to the commercial market, CD will become an important factor in the marketplace for the first time and the fate of the Amiga as a viable gaming system may well be decided by next winter. More and more games will demand 386 processors with a speed of at least 12MHz, VGA and special sound boards.

Publishers will emphasize brain games and high quality while throttling back on simple action games and generic European product. Licensing and sequels are set to remain highly important in computer gaming, with a concomitant decline in fully original concepts.

The overwhelming acceptance of IBM PC machines has given computer gaming a de facto standard—and the closest thing to a mass audience this side of the NES. America's gamers will be watching closely to see if the industry brings forth games that can capture the imagination of this huge potential market, or whether it will migrate to CD or even slip away entirely.

KA·GE·KI

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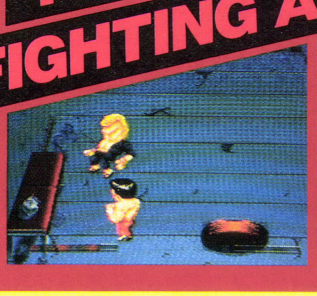
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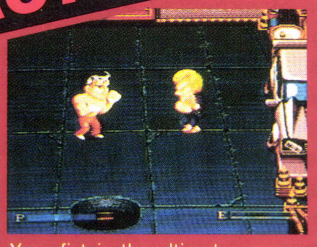
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The Gold of the Aztecs

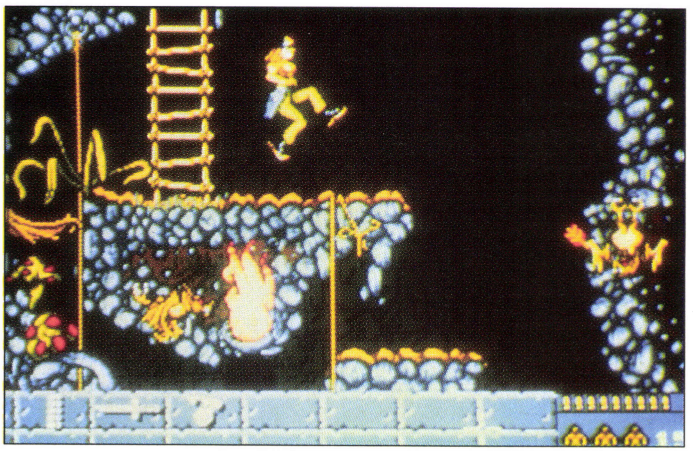
U.S. GOLD
Versions: Amiga ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Side-scrolling action-adventures have not fared well, by and large, in the PC universe, and *The Gold of the Aztecs* is a virtual sampler of what can go wrong when developers try to bring Nintendo sensibility to an IBM PC computer.

The back of the box tells us that Kinetica Software's *Gold of the Aztecs* consumed "three man years of development, 7,000 frames of animation, 140 hero actions, 18,000 individual pieces of graphics, 600K of music and sound effects, eight megabytes of code and data [and] over 80 screens of nonstop action and devious puzzles." The end result, however, is a product that rates slightly below a typical NES *Double Dragon* clone.

U.S. Gold's *The Gold of the Aztecs* suffers from an awkward control system.



The problems are many and varied. First, there is the matter of expectations. Computer owners simply demand more from a game than directing a player-character on a linear, sideways journey from Point A to Point B, slaughtering everything that moves along the way. Even by video-game standards, however, *Gold* is mostly alloy. The only strategic component revolves around the selection of weapon/action icons, and even these are pretty feeble, consisting entirely of gun, knife, reload gun and pull-lever commands. Worse still, cycling from one icon to the next is not accomplished by pressing the second joystick button, but by the space bar. Anyone who has ever played a game on a computer knows what a nuisance switching from joystick to keyboard is. Here, the annoyance is compounded by the fact that the second joystick button doesn't have anything better to do; as it stands, Button 2 merely parrots the functions of the primary button!

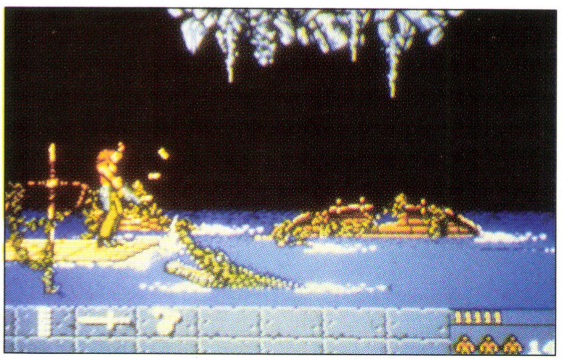
Gold's main drawback, however, is its awkward control system. PC joysticks are notoriously imprecise, but recent products such as Disney's *Arachnophobia* and Dynamix's *Stellar 7* made real breakthroughs in reduced response time and sharpened command reactions. Here, the user is likely to have problems simply getting their surrogate to walk, duck, turn around and jump, much less perform such exotic feats as firing a gun alternately at front and rear targets from a kneeling position.

The graphics are acceptable, but the color palette, even on the EGA version, is rather drab and limited. (A VGA version is available but can only be obtained through the mail.) The music and sound effects, especially on systems equipped with an Ad Lib or Roland sound board, are the game's strongest feature, along with the simple but complete instructions and the forthright packaging, including six screen shots on the back of the box.

The Gold of the Aztecs is not a bad piece of work, but its overall effect is not unlike watching a typical TV sitcom at a wide-screen movie theater. The show may still be viewable, but the new medium makes the material seem even thinner.

—Bill Kunkel

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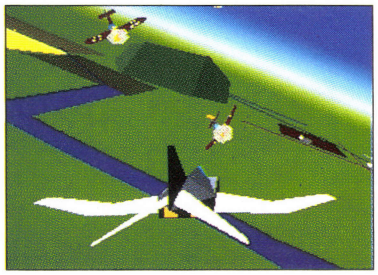


Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

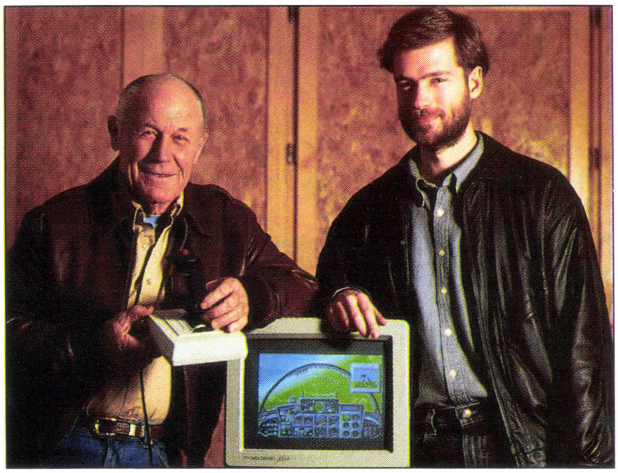
ELECTRONIC ARTS
Version: IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Every once in a while a program comes along that surprises everyone, even the industry insiders. *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* is such a program. One should expect a program that bears General Yeager's endorsement to be a definitive rendition of the genre, but insiders know that the flight-simulation market is among the most crowded in the industry. It takes a program of extraordinary merit to rise to the top of the pack.



Chuck Yeager's Air Combat fills that role on every level, covering all major eras of modern air warfare from WW II to Vietnam. Although this period encompasses the transition from propeller driven, whites-of-the-eyes combat to supersonic missile engagements, these jets still differ from the "look down/shoot down" aircraft of today in many ways. Over-the-horizon radar engagements were still a gleam in the eyes of aerodynamic engineers. One of the bitter lessons of Vietnam was that pilots had come to rely on their weaponry more than their dogfighting ability. *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* reinforces this historical hindsight by rightfully focusing on the essence of tactical air combat—speed and maneuverability—in the era of visual engagements.





Chuck Yeager's Air Combat offers something unprecedented in the genre; fantasy combat between individual or groups of aircraft of the player's choosing.

Chuck Yeager's Air Combat improves upon the graphic engine used in *LHX Attack Chopper* through more detailed modeling of aircraft and ground targets (eliminating the angular, unnatural feel of straight polygon-fill images) and increased use of bitmaps for explosions. The combined effect is every bit as good as Lucasfilm's *Battle of Britain* for the air-to-air sequences, with vastly improved ground targets and terrain. Mountains still appear like pyramids for the most part, but if one drops down from 10,000 to 1,000 feet, there's a pleasant surprise: Enemy airfields are complete with hangers, control towers and the like. On strafing missions, truck convoys scurry like field mice when the shadow of the hawk descends on them. These details aid the player in suspending disbelief. It's truly unnerving to be bounced by enemy fighters that were unseen while you were lining up a juicy ground target in the gunsight.

A sound board greatly enhances the gaming experience. Not only does General Yeager speak to the player during the briefing and debriefing sequences (and it sounds just like him!), one will also find that everything is accurately rendered, from the bullet thumps to the tone a pilot hears in his headset when his missile seeker head "locks on." The program is enjoyable without these nuances, but it's so much better with sound board support that *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* may provide sufficient reason to make the purchase.

The program has over a dozen missions for each period, some of which were flown by General Yeager himself. Additionally, *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* offers something unprecedented in the genre; fantasy combat between individual or groups of aircraft of the player's choosing. Using a simple "there I was at 'x' feet, when I jumped/was jumped by 'x' number of whatever types of aircraft" scenario generation is quick and painless. Through this medium, one can take an F-4, for example, against two or three ME-109s, or a ME-109 and a F-86 if desired. The player is only limited by his or her own imagination.

There's a full VCR playback and editing feature that is every bit as polished as any other on the market. Although a "campaign" feature is listed, one does *not* develop and maintain pilot records as in other programs (so the role-playing element does not exist). Instead, selecting a campaign simply means that one must fly all of the missions in a given war for both sides before they can progress.

The emphasis on flying by the seat of one's pants may prove too much for "fly by wire F-16/F-19 yuppie warriors." Hey gang, don't take it as a slam, take it as a challenge. Buy the program!

—Ed Dille

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continued on page 98

ADVERTISER INDEX

Advertiser	Page #	RSC #
Acclaim	11	106
Bignet USA, Inc.	29	114
BRE Software	117	151
Camerica	7	104
Capcom USA	3	102
Chips and Bits	45	126
Doc's Hi-Tech	69	132
Electronic Arts	74-75	135
FCI	21	111
Fun Co.	79,103	136,145
Greer and Associates	81	137
Ground Zero	41	122
HAL America	71	133
HO/RC Hobbies	115	148
Hudson Soft	37	119
Interplay	39	120
Irem	8-9	105
Koei	65	131
Konami	IFC,4	101,103
Light Wave Technologies	41	123
LJN	27	113
Meldac Of America	83	138
MicroProse Software	51	129
Namco	32,33,IBC	116,117,153
NEC Technologies	30-31	115
New England Services	41,103	121,143
Play It Again	91	140
Quantum Gaming	103	142
Radiance Software	103	144
Renovation Products	23	112
Sage's Creations	93	141
SCI	99	—
Sega Game Gear	16-17	109
Sega	52-53	130
Spectrum HoloByte	35	118
Strategic Simulations	13	—
Sunsoft	107	—
Supremacy	48	108
Taito	19	110
Telegames	115	150
Tengen	118	152
The Game X-Change	42	124
Totally Turbo	87	—
U.S. Gold	BC	154
Vic Tokai	49,109	128,147
Video Game Headquarters	115	149
Virgin Games Inc.	43,73	125,134

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continued from page 95

Das Boot: German U-Boat Simulation

THREE-SIXTY SOFTWARE
Versions: Amiga ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

How would you feel if you were invited to a free night at the local arcade, then found out when you got there that the only game there was for you to play was *Pong*? Probably pretty much like someone who just booted up *Das Boot* for the first time.

Seventy percent of this gut reaction is based on expectation versus reality. Three-Sixty designed and marketed the most realistic simulation of modern naval combat in existence, *Harpoon.* When they announced the release of *Das Boot*, a simulation of U-boat warfare based on the popular book and film of the same name, it seemed logical to expect similar realism.

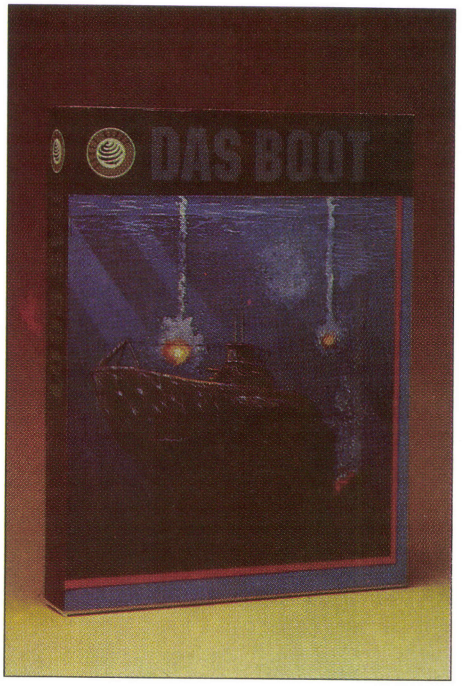
Instead, *Das Boot* could be much more accurately described as "*GATO* goes through puberty." To put it in more recent terms, think of the interface in *Destroyer* (Epyx), where the player races around the boat to man each weapons station and must save the day via an arcade sequence. In other words, don't attribute too much meaning to the word "simulation" in the title.

To learn and master the arcade sequences that dominate the action, the player should spend some time in the Baltic training area before selecting one of the five set missions included. First is the anti-aircraft gun, which is exactly like that sequence in *Beachhead* (Access), albeit with some improved graphics. Next is the deck gun, reminiscent of the earliest ballistic type games. There's not even a marking for gun elevation. Just raise, lower and watch the dot travel to the target, for one hit/one kill. This is not even close to the same situation as portrayed in *Silent Service II* (MicroProse).

Next comes surface torpedo runs, again, one shot/one kill, regardless of target type (and submerged is no different). Sub versus sub is from an external 3-D perspective that shows both subs (cinematic, but not realistic). Depth charges and underwater mine fields are handled in the same manner. Surface mine fields are in the first person perspective from the conning tower, and the player loses 10% of the sub's ability with every mine struck.

In the mission section of the game, the player plunges down into the Arctic, operates in the fjords around Norway and goes against the North Atlantic convoys, or the like. Regardless of choice, the only difference between this area and the training area is the necessity to operate the boat to get from one arcade sequence to the next.

The player moves about the ship's various areas: engine room, control room, map room, radio room, torpedo room, etc. Each has its own screen and command icons. It's easiest to manipulate with a mouse, though one is not necessary, but some keyboard manipulation is required. The most interesting area is the radio room, which includes some rudimentary deciphering equipment that's fun to use when decoding allied messages.



Das Boot: German U-Boat Simulation, by Three-Sixty Software, is a military-based game that doesn't impose the normal military emphasis on strategy and tactics.

The graphics are, with the exception of the underwater screens, fairly rudimentary polygon fill.

For arcade players that are looking for a military-based game that doesn't impose the normal emphasis on strategy and tactics, *Das Boot* is definitely the clear choice.

—E. D.

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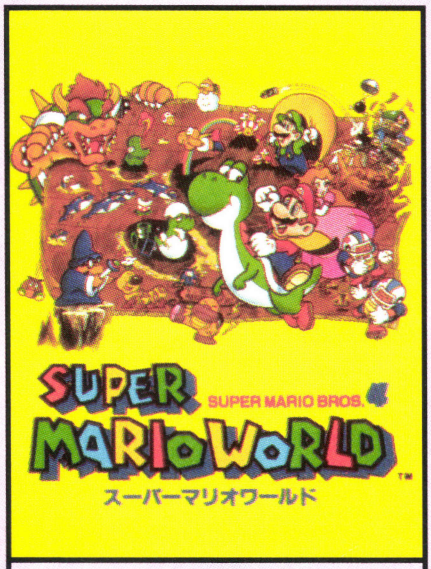
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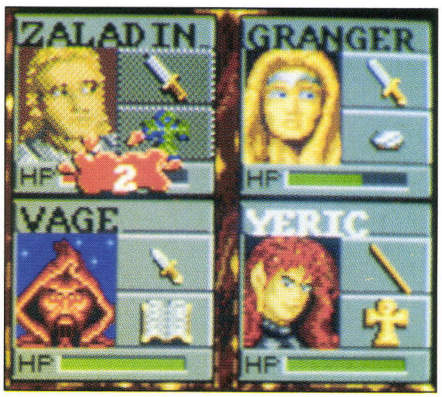
Eye of the Beholder

STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS
Versions: Amiga ($59.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Since the days of the early *Ultima* games, computer adventures have increasingly included more complicated scenarios, more combat options and characters more complex than a list of numbers. Yet while providing this level of intricacy, the games sacrificed a key ingredient in good role-playing: real-time action. During battle, characters were confined in special combat screens that placed everything happening outside of battle on hold. This is changing. In SSI's beautifully animated *Eye of the Beholder,* characters can fight, run, solve puzzles and even eat their rations at the same time!

Eye of the Beholder is the first Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game to use the new second-edition rules, making the details easier to comprehend than in *Pool of Radiance* and its successors. The smaller weapons lists and less complicated rules also make success more dependent on strategy and quick-thinking, rather than mere mastery of charts and tables.





***SSI's Eye of the Beholder* is the first AD&D game to use the new second-edition rules.**

With even the character backgrounds and on-screen command buttons carefully drawn and shaded, *Eye of the Beholder* supplies another element missing from those early role-playing games: atmosphere. Almost everything that can be animated is—monsters, missile weapons and the heavy iron gates found throughout the sewers. In this 3-D adventure, foes such as giant spiders and mind flayers look especially threatening and can actually be seen lurking around corners or through small openings in doors. Also, hidden buttons and levers are remarkably displayed obscurely, but not invisibly, regardless of monitor type.

Eye of the Beholder is as fast as it is attractive. Combat is quick and brutal, and the menu-driven system makes good use of both the mouse and keyboard. Healing, the most laborious activity in the other AD&D games, is handled automatically. And since all items appear on the character drawing, trading takes place without dependence on confusing menus.

Unfortunately, with all the attention that went into the game, the designers failed to create an interesting scenario. The rule book contains several maps and a detailed history of Waterdeep, which has little to do with the adventure but, hopefully, will be utilized in future installments.

Overall, considering the graphics, real-time play and lack of problems that plagued other AD&D products, *Eye of the Beholder* is an exceptional game. And, for those who have trouble, the clue book is as well-designed as possible without resorting to an invisible ink pen.

—David S. Moskowitz

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
(408) 737-6800

Ultima Worlds of Adventure 2: Martian Dreams

ORIGIN
Version: IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

One of the best decisions Origin ever made was to take the *Ultima* game-playing system and the player's character, the Avatar, into new places and times in *Worlds of Adventure. Martian Dreams* is the second in this ongoing series of games scheduled to hit the software shelves between the numbered *Ultima* adventures. *Martian Dreams* takes a radi-

cal approach to *Ultima* quests in that the game bases its story on historical events and people rather than the mythical and fantastic lands and creatures of the previous adventures.

Like all *Ultima* adventures, the plot is detailed, and the characters are many. *Martian Dreams* pits the Avatar and some historical figures, notably Nellie Bly, Dr. C.L. Blood, Sigmund Freud and Nikola Tesla, against conditions on Mars in order to save and return a group of famous people that rocketed to the red planet by accident two years earlier. Percival Lowell was the leader of that ill-fated expedition, which started out as a visit to his rocket. Suspiciously, someone fired the rocket and stranded Lowell and his passengers on Mars.

The goal of *Martian Dreams* is to return the accidental tourists to Earth and discover the secrets of Mars along the way. A lot of creativity went into the development of a Martian history and the interaction of the characters on the planet. This strengthens the merits of a fine product.

The interface for *Martian Dreams* is a combination of the systems used in *Ultima VI* and *The Savage Empire*, and the best way to play is with a mouse, but the keyboard is also active.

The screen is divided into four sections. The top right shows the status display and inventory windows. The status display lists the characters accompanying the Avatar on the quest, and the inventory for each character pops up when you click on that person's icon. Object manipulation in the inventory windows is logical, and placement of readied objects only requires a simple click.

The bottom-right quarter of the screen contains the display for text descriptions and messages. At the top left is the main display of the Avatar's current position on Mars and the immediate surroundings. Finally, the bottom-left part of the screen replaces command icons with levers. To enter a command, simply click on a lever and then on the object of the action.

The graphics are wonderful. Most of the objects are clear, and the characters are distinct. It was a good idea to keep all games after *Ultima VI* on the same scale; this adds to the realism of exploration.

As is usual with Origin products, the packaging for *Martian Dreams* is special. Along with the reference cards, the box contains a booklet listing the major historical figures in the game (there are many), another booklet that describes Mars and its creatures in gory detail and a map of the planet's surface. These inclusions add a lot of atmosphere and also offer many hints.

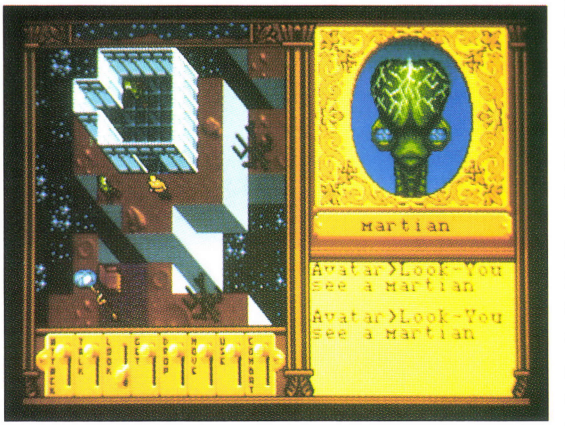
There are only two problems with the game. Whenever a pile of objects is in a location, only the topmost object is accessible. It would be nice in the future to allow cycling of the objects to get whatever the player wants to the top.

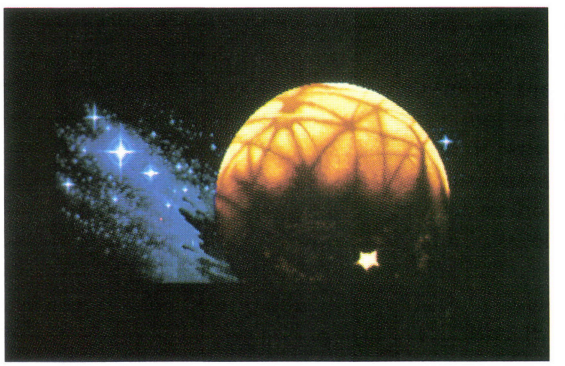
The other problem is something that Origin should correct for future releases. The sounds and music in *Martian Dreams* are of the finest quality. Unfortunately, to hear music in the game requires a memory-manager program that most users do not own. Origin should instead support the major sound boards directly.

Martian Dreams is the next step in the development of the *Ultima* game world. The many historical figures in the game add urgency to the goal, and the secrets revealed later in the game are well worth the wait. The terrain and structures of Mars will certainly keep players busy. *Martian Dreams* sets another fine example for plot development and character interaction. Putting all of this together results in a different type of challenge to keep players busy until *Ultima VII* appears in stores across America.

—Russ Ceccola

Origin Systems, Inc.
P.O. Box 161750
Austin, TX 78716
(512) 328-0282





***Martian Dreams* takes a radical approach to the *Ultima* quest in that the game bases its story on historical events and people rather than mythical lands and creatures.**

Heart of China

DYNAMIX

Version: IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

Dynamix took well over two years to finish *Heart of China*, but the result is well worth the wait. Graphically stunning, musically compelling and well-integrated, *Heart of China* is the latest in the wave of

adventures from Sierra and Dynamix that strive to take full advantage of home-computer capabilities.

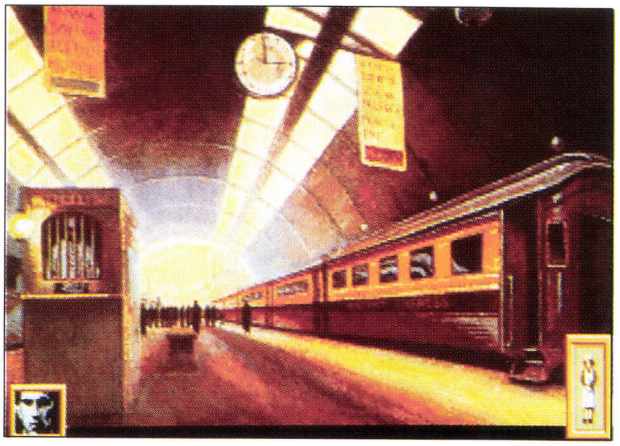
Because of the way Dynamix put the game together, there are many endings and varied paths to those endings. As a result, the game can be played more than once, and there will still be new things to see. Overall, the experience is closer to a movie than most other adventures dare attempt. Best of all, it stays enjoyable throughout.

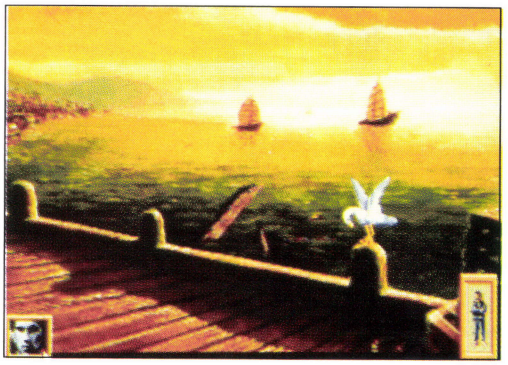
Like a good movie, *Heart of China* has a large and varied cast; there are three main characters and a host of others. The player must take the part of all three of the focus characters at different points in the game: Kate Lomax, daughter of an American tycoon who is held prisoner by a corrupt military leader in China; "Lucky" Jake Masters, a pilot indebted to Kate's father, who has ten days to rescue her; and Chi, a ninja who guides Kate and Jake to safety. The story takes the trio all over Asia in search of an escape route. An important feature of character interaction in *Heart of China* is their ability to remember past actions. It is imperative that everything a player does moves Kate closer to freedom. Sore enemies have a way of popping up at unexpected moments.

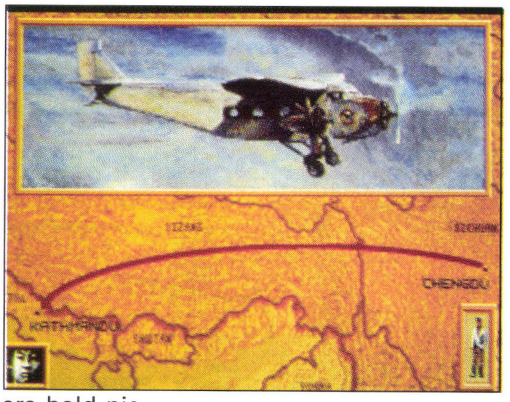
Heart of China is the second game to use the new Dynamix Game Development System. (*Rise of the Dragon* was the first.) The screen is dominated by a picture of the current location. Boxes in the lower corners hold pictures of characters and access inventory windows when selected. The highly intuitive interface in *Heart of China* works best with a mouse. It is quite easy to learn, and all actions in the game are based on the three simple options: look, move and operate.

In addition to normal interface usage, at various points in the game a signpost screen appears to indicate a plot-branching point. Save the game before these points, then explore all avenues. But remember, *Heart of China* takes place in "real time." Periodically sequences show up to let the player know what has happened elsewhere in the game.

All of the characters in *Heart of China* are digitized actors and actresses, and the background scenes are scanned paintings. This graphic technique makes *Heart of China* jump out of the monitor in superbly realistic detail. Scanned pictures are all the rage in computer games these days, a development that is reasonable, given the amazingly quick changes in hardware over the last few years. *Heart of China* is at the cutting edge of graphic splendor. Now we can only hope that in the future games will all look as good as this beautiful adventure.









Like a good motion picture, *Heart of China* has a large and varied cast.

Music and sound effects are exceptional. Like a good movie soundtrack, the music in *Heart of China* draws the player deeper into the plot. Both music and graphics combine well in the two arcade sequences incorporated into the game. These are a tank game and a thrilling fight sequence on top of the Orient Express for the joystick jockeys. If the sequences are too hard, don't worry about it. Dynamix thought enough of the player to allow modification of the difficulty level of the sequences. This unusual feature should please most players.

The documentation is well-written and offers a lot of hints for an observant player. One manual describes game controls and outlines the plot, while another acts as a travel guide to the locations in the game. Together, the two provide more than enough guidance to play the game. Packaged in an attractive box cover with a raised surface, *Heart of China* has everything going for it. It combines the right blend of romance, action, adventure and mystery. From the Orient Express to Paris, the game follows the trail established by movies like *Romancing the Stone* and the Indiana Jones trilogy. Jake is a strong and resourceful character, and Kate makes a great damsel in distress.

Heart of China meets all expectations and stays action-packed throughout. You'll really feel you've lived a true adventure when you finally make it to the best possible ending!

—R. C.

Dynamix/Sierra
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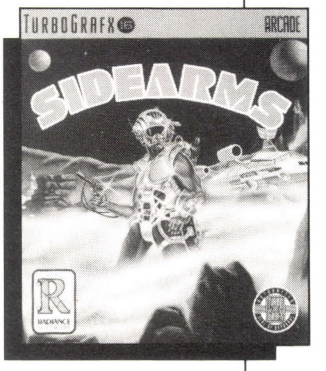
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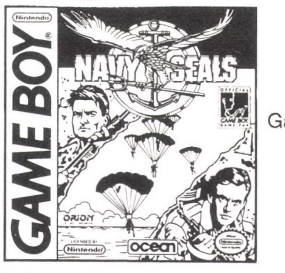
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Crime Does Not Pay

TITUS SOFTWARE

Versions: Amiga ($49.95), Atari ST ($49.95), CDTV ($44.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Or does it? That's the question the player struggles to answer in Titus Software's new game, *Crime Does Not Pay.* The goal is to become the city's next head of organized crime and make crime pay as well as it possibly can. The game is officially endorsed by the Mafia, but don't be too concerned about proving that crime does pay. After all, it's only a game...a fantasy game, at that.

The player joins either the Italian or Chinese Mafia and becomes one of three characters from each clan: The godfather, the hit man or the dangerous girl. Each character has his or her own unique abilities, but it's up to the player to figure out what they are and use them accordingly.

After selecting clan and character, the quest begins on the streets of the city. The player must find influential people, such as the mayor, and get them to come over to his or her side. How? By greasing his palms, see? Sounds like Edward G. Robinson, huh?



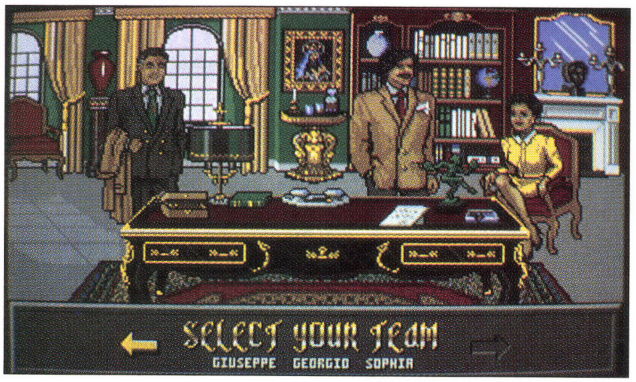
Unfortunately, nasty thugs try to deprive the antihero of the opportunity to rise to the head of the syndicate. It's not easy to reach that lofty goal, because competition for control of the city is vicious. Not only will the fledgling criminal have to use a trusty handgun for self-defense, but he must also collect items that can be used to accomplish the quest, such as ammunition, keys and money (which, illogically, is lying around just about everywhere).

The game is fun once the player gets beyond certain quirks. The joystick routine is not very well implemented, and the gamer frequently winds up shooting the gun at the most inopportune times, like when the police are lurking nearby. (They can't be killed because they wear bullet-proof vests.) It's also much easier to shoot the darn gun than it is to holster it.

The animation is adequate, but the screen flickers and jerks while it scrolls. VGA owners will be disappointed; the program is strictly 16-color EGA all the way.







In *Crime Does Not Pay*, by Titus Software, gamers must become the city's next head of organized crime.

With sound board support, the music is excellent (reminiscent of the roaring twenties). Inexplicably, there are no sounds accompanying such actions as firing the handgun; this is a peculiar deficiency, and the game would have been greatly enhanced with better effects. The above ratings are based on the Ad Lib music and EGA graphics. Potential buyers desiring sound effects and 256-color VGA graphics should look elsewhere.

The game ends when all characters are either dead or in jail. At that point, the program drops back to DOS and must be rebooted, then reconfigured for joystick use. Thankfully, there's a save-game function, but, sadly, the program itself is not pest-free. Several times when attempting to save a game in progress, the display filled with garbage.

The package uses the "keydisk" copy-protection scheme, meaning that even though the game is loaded and running from the hard drive, the floppy must remain in its drive too.

Crime Does Not Pay is not a totally unique idea. *King of Chicago* (Cine-

maware) did it long ago (and also did it a lot better). But for gamers who want to play their way through a life of crime, this program does present another look at law and order—from the other side.

—Frank Eva

Titus Software
20432 Corisco St.
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(818) 709-3692

Vaxine

U.S. GOLD

Versions: Amiga ($39.95), Atari ST ($39.95), IBM PC ($39.95)

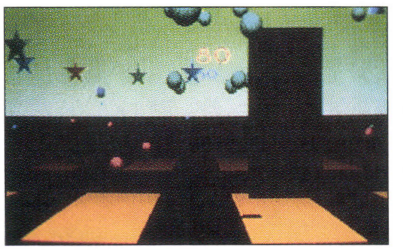
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

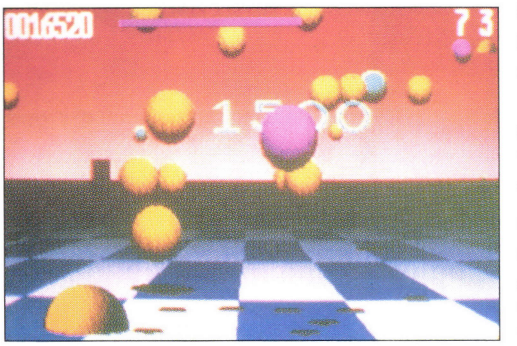
Imagine being so tiny that cells loom like giant balls. Equipped with the right weapons, you could blast viruses right out of existence and perhaps provide a cure to diseases that have so far eluded the best efforts of medical science. This is the premise of *Vaxine,* a fast action game in which the player must save the life of the U.S. President by destroying the three types of viral cells that have invaded his body.

The gaming field, viewed from the front window of a miniature sub, is a multicolored checkerboard that scrolls smoothly in all directions. The player pilots the craft with mouse, keyboard or joystick. Small, half-dome shapes litter the landscape—these are the bases, which must be protected. If all the bases are destroyed, the game is over.

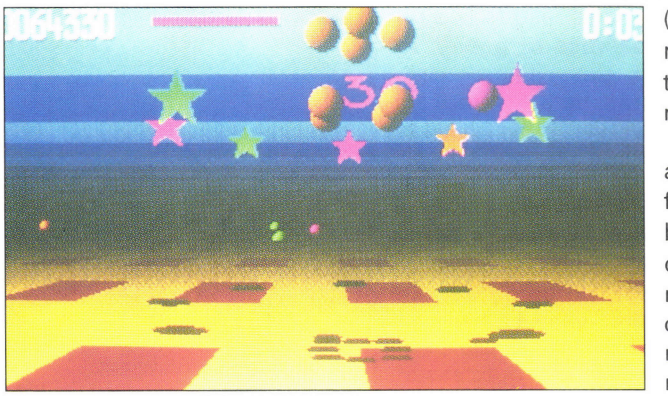
The enemy are three types of virus cells. Distinguished by color, their main aim in life is to bond together in groups of three or more. When they manage this, they then converge on a base to suck the life out of it. Other varieties of cells include spitters (they spawn more cells) and hatchers that split up into many cells when hit.

The goal is to destroy the viral cells. The gamer's arsenal is made up of three types of projectile weapons whose colors correspond to those of the enemy cells. It's easy to choose the color of the next shot, and the color currently in use is shown in an on-screen indicator. Dispatch a projectile of the same color to immediately destroy the cell, but if it's shot with a weapon of a different color, a star appears that bounces three times. Hit it before the third bounce for an addition to the supply of ammunition. It is crucial to master this maneuver, since it is one of the few ways to recharge the ammo supply during battle. If you are unable to hit the star, shots will be deducted from the supply. There are also different groups of stars to shoot at in order to recharge the ammunition. Once the player runs out of any particular color of ammunition, the game ends.

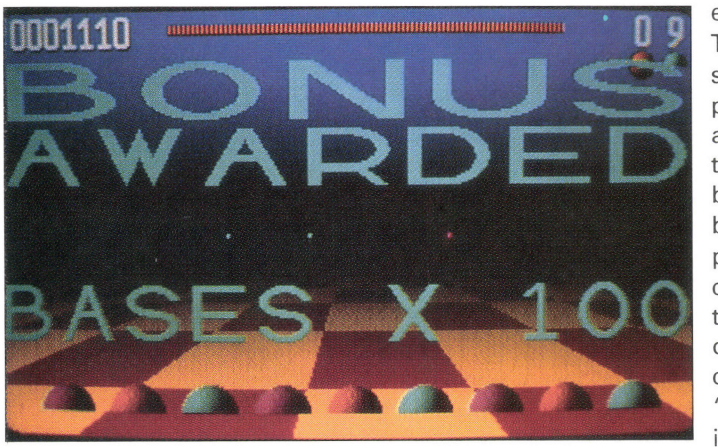




There are other items in this game, including portals that freeze everything until a shot is fired or time runs out. Portals make viral cells more aggressive, so they must be used with caution. DNA strings cost five times the number of shots. There is also a guidance system (called psychic radar) that guides the pilot to the nearest enemy cell.



Vaxine could be a really good salve for the shooter's blues, but there's one fly in the ointment. It's diabolically difficult to master the technique of destroying enemy cells. There's no aiming system at all—just press the trigger, and shots fly across the landscape, bounding along in barely predictable paths. The player can adjust the shots to have inertia if desired, and this can be helpful. The "no inertia" setting is virtually unusable if the sub is moving at all. Yet this small added control is not as good a cure as the shots flying straight and true at their intended targets.



***Vaxine* is a fast action game in which the player must save the life of the U.S. President by destroying the three types of viral cells that have invaded his body.**

Even at the very lowest levels, this game quickly becomes frustrating as the player madly attempts to destroy the cells in the president's body. My word, they'd have better luck with chemotherapy!

—David Plotkin

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COMPUTER STRATEGIES

How to Defeat the Red Baron

DYNAMIX/SIERRA
Versions: Amiga, IBM PC

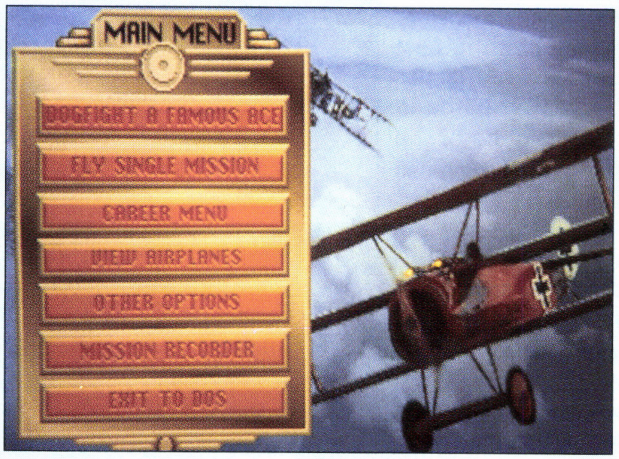
Flying the unfriendly skies of *Red Baron* is not unlike riding a roller coaster. The introduction of new aircraft by both sides throughout the war results in dramatic shifts in the balance of power. In campaign games, the player has no control over which aircraft he'll fly until he reaches the rank of Captain (after 15 kills). At this point players can request a "personal aircraft" from all models in service at the time. Once requisitioned, the player must use the aircraft for several months before asking for another type.

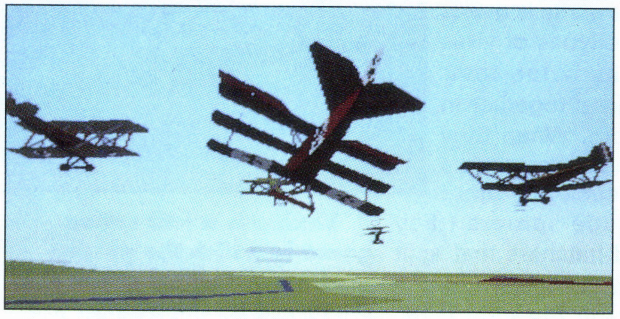
Historical hindsight, provided via the excellent documentation, allows players to plan aircraft transitions to minimize periods when they're hopelessly outclassed by new enemy fighters. For the Germans, it's best to start with either an Albatros D.II or III (when available), progress to a Pfalz D.III by the summer of 1917 and then upgrade to a Fokker Dr.I Triplane in late 1917. Fokker D.VII's are available by May 1918, but the flyer may be so comfortable with the Triplane by this point that he will be reluctant to change.

For the British, start with the Morane-Saulnier "Bullet," a scout of French design. With skill and a little cunning, the pilot should rack up ten or more kills with this aircraft prior to February 1916, when the Airco D.H.2 ("the spinning incinerator") is introduced. Despite its intimidating nickname, this aircraft is highly maneuverable and can often account for four to six kills in a mission. By summer 1916, the Brit should opt for the Nieuport 17 for maneuverability or the Spad 7 for durability and speed, depending on dogfighting preferences. Finally, aspire toward ownership of a Sopwith Camel, despite its quirky torque problem.

Before exploring the nuances of aerial combat, some basics are in order. The first is a keen appreciation for relative motion: the speed and direction of travel the target has in relation to one's aircraft. This is critical, because all attacks except from directly astern or directly ahead (the preferred shots due to low relative motion) involve learning to lead the target by varying amounts.





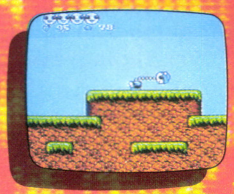


Most of the actions in *Red Baron* are squadron melees. With two to eight aircraft mixing it up, things rapidly become confusing. There are several critical points. First, change viewpoints rapidly to keep an eye on approaching attackers, even when about to put the finishing touch on the enemy in your sights. Myopia is deadly; if a bogey comes up from behind, it is almost always better to disengage from the current target, shake the bogey and open the range before reengaging. This often allows you to build up a speed advantage for the new attack.

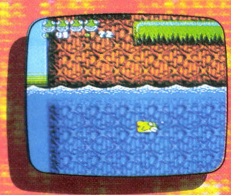
Specific offensive tactics include mastery of the dive and zoom climb. Opponents often dip their nose into a dive as you approach, then suddenly pull back on the stick to sacrifice speed for altitude. To turn their escape attempt into a kill every time, hesitate two seconds after they start to dive, then point up on them. Keep them in the sights until they start to climb again, then pull back on the stick to complete a shallower dive/climb combination. Lo and behold, look who looms up in the gunsight at close range...scratch one enemy plane with a sustained burst.

The enemy often scissors left and right as you approach from behind and out of range. Resist the temptation to mimic his turns, and rapidly close within range. When ready to fire, shoot before he actual-

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ly crosses the gunsight. At this point, more experienced enemy pilots will cease the scissor move and break left or right. Commit in the same direction, even though it means overshooting and losing the target. That way, if he does cut back to the original direction, he'll only have a quick crossing shot, but if he continues to turn, you'll reacquire him for a quartering shot.

On the defensive, with an enemy closing from behind, the best option (if at sufficient altitude) is to roll inverted and pull back on the stick to execute a Split-S. This loses all but the most persistent adversaries. Unfortunately, this also loses a lot of altitude, so combine it with a zoom climb to get back up to the action. The best defense when you're greatly outnumbered is to disengage and try to make it home.

Finally, when flying special missions against enemy aces, take time to read their biographies in the manual. It provides invaluable insight into how to defeat each of them.

—Ed Dille

Winning Tactics for Command HQ

MICROPROSE
Version: IBM PC

Command HQ employs a wide variety of units, and each has its advantages and weaknesses. Knowing how to use these is the difference between victory and defeat.

INFANTRY

Infantry are slow and they have a nasty habit of getting so committed to a battle that they die before they can pull out of one they are losing. This doesn't have to happen; land units will respond to "coaxing." If they are ordered several times instead of just once, they sometimes break an entrenchment and move.

On the other hand, infantry are cheap to build, they don't use much oil and they can dig in. A single infantry entrenched inside a city can hold off a single attacking tank unit.

Infantry at sea move quickly. Pick paths that allow the infantry to make the most progress by water. For instance, move from dock square to dock square. Be careful, though; an infantry or tank unit on water will go down with a single sub hit.

ARMOR

Armor costs twice what infantry does and uses more oil. Those are the only bad points. Armor is faster, hits harder and can back out of a battle that's going poorly. It can also slip in close to other battling units to rescue a weakened unit and sometimes steal a contested city.

SUBS

Subs exist for the surprise hit. The ideal place for them is waiting patiently in a sea lane or just outside a city filled with land units getting ready to cross over water to the other side.

When surface ships (cruisers and aircraft carriers) are in the area, pull the subs together to fight in wolf packs.

CRUISERS

Cruisers can fight subs to a draw and will win if they can stay just outside of the subs' range during the battle. They can also perform shore bombardment and sense units and city alignments at a distance—two things those sneaky subs can't do.

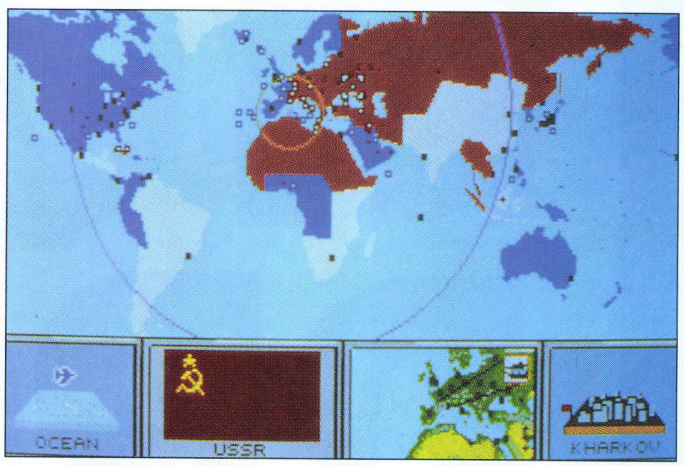
Cruisers can soften up coastal defenses before an oncoming amphibious invasion, but cruisers and other ships that get too close to a land unit (overlapping) will be bombarded by the land unit.

UNSINKABLE CRUISERS

Shore bombardment alone can never kill a land unit. This means that land units can be used as "unsinkable cruisers" by putting them on strategic coasts and islands. There are dozens of good spots in the Mediterranean where an infantry dug in on the coast can rip up a passing enemy fleet.

CARRIERS

Carriers bombard from a greater distance than cruisers. They may also carry airplanes that can bombard as well. They can be a powerful assist in fleet battles and amphibious invasions. However, they aren't immune to either cruisers or subs and can be sunk by massed enemy ship attacks. Given that a carrier with aircrafts is worth a cool $40 billion, it definitely will be massed by enemy cruisers and subs if there are any in the region.



AIRCRAFT

Even though aircraft are very expensive, they are devastating. They will half the strength of an enemy land unit they hit, and will cut by a quarter a ship's strength. They can sink ships, but it takes a lot of hits (up to six) to eliminate a land unit by only air attacks. Their weakness is the long time it takes to move them from place to place, and the long time between air strikes. Aircraft are also the first to suffer when oil runs out.

Always mass the aircraft. Have two to four based out of the same city. Use some to start an assault on a nearby city, but always save one or two to halt the "just in time" buildup that so often occurs after an assault is under way.

City-based aircraft can also carry infantry on paratroop assaults. These can be useful for flying over fleet-infested waters and reaching those "lost cities" of the deep Amazon jungle.

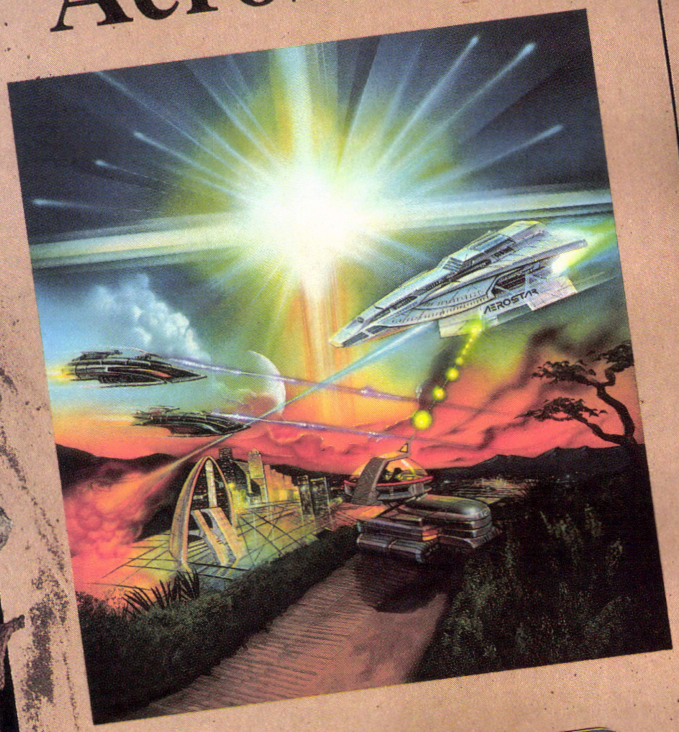
—Roger White, Jr.

Vol. XXXXIV, Issue XXXIXVXI

September 17th, 2087

GALAXY GAZETTE

Aerostar Blasts To Earth!



It has been many years since the Intergalactic Council allowed the earth to be populated after a series of devastating wars. In the years following our return we as a people have struggled for survival. The most difficult battle is still ahead. At this writing, mutant forces are wreaking havoc on our defenseless planet.

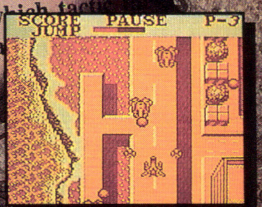
Our cry for help has not gone unanswered. The Intergalactic Council has made an effort to stop these violent attacks by deploying AEROSTAR. This state-of-the-art nuclear-generated vehicle of destruction is ready to face the most intense combat. Unfortunately, AEROSTAR is missing the most important factor—a pilot.

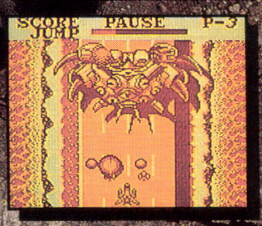
As the search for our defender persists, conditions on earth grow worse. The human people can only hope salvation is near.

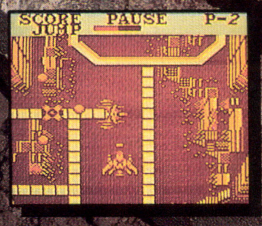
AEROSTAR

Intergalactic Council Meeting Today.

members from nine galaxies are I to discuss the future forces. They here to reach an agreement on w troy the enemy, Earth lea attacks. Intergalactic Earth soon.









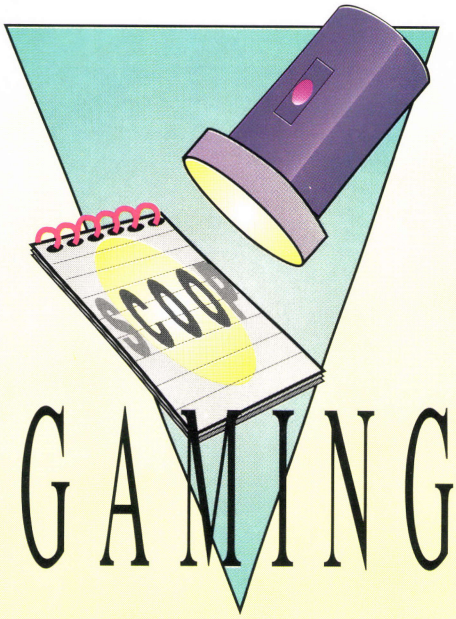
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INSIDE



GAMING

LATE-SUMMER MUSINGS ON THE ELECTRONIC GAMING INDUSTRY

by Arnie Katz

Writer, editor, lecturer and game designer Arnie Katz knows the field from every perspective. Each month, his column takes readers inside the world of video and computer games. Writing from his poolside in Las Vegas, Arnie tackles his own biggest dissatisfaction with today's electronic games.

If someone hates software pirates more than me, I haven't yet had the pleasure of meeting him or her. Besides my disapproval on ethical grounds (stealing is stealing by whatever fancy name it's called), I have a personal grudge against folks who unlawfully take the games Subway Software designed.

Bill Kunkel, Joyce Worley and I had the dispiriting experience of having our first computer game, *Borrowed Time* (Mediagenic), pirated into oblivion. During the winter of 1985, I couldn't sign on a computer network or bulletin board without finding a whole bunch of people talking about it, yet sales were pathetic. We never made a cent beyond the small initial advance until Virgin Games republished the 1930s detective thriller as *Time to Die* last year.



Yet even I have to laugh when the same designers and developers who copy each other's work without compunction wail about someone ripping off their games instead of buying them. Talk about a case of pots and kettles!

Electronic gaming is a convoluted paradox when it comes to the question of originality. The soaring artistic imagination that breathes life into the classic games exists side by side with legions of slavish copycats. Many of the programmers, designers, musicians and artists are sincere game-lovers who only want to produce the finest play experience possible, but circumstances too often intervene and subvert lofty intentions into by-the-numbers development.

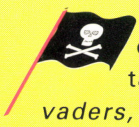
Design thievery is as old as electronic gaming. In fact, it predates it. The history of coin-op pinball is a parade of imitations, knockoffs and near clones. Any time one company scored a hit, virtually every competitor would rush to develop something as much like it as the law would allow.



Coin-op videos picked up this dubious tradition without missing a beat. In fact, the limited hardware capabilities of the early video quarter-snatchers provided a good excuse for the similarity of so many of the machines.

The minute the first *Pong* cabinet hit the arcades in 1970, other manufacturers started working on play-alikes. When "hard-wired" video tennis games hit the home screen, there were two-dozen companies offering substantially the same contests under slightly different names.

This continued during the first golden age of home-programmable video-game consoles in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Software designers with an assignment to create a new cartridge would visit the local family amusement center and glom on to any concept that looked hot. The arcade contest *Avalanche* has substantially the same play action as the video-gaming classic *Ka-Boom*. The developers added a few flourishes, like the mad bomber who shuttles back and forth across the top of the screen, but the common features of *Avalanche* and *Ka-boom* are inescapably obvious.



Similarly, dozens of arcade and home games blatantly mimicked *Space Invaders, Pac-Man* and *Asteroids*. There were at least as many bogus *Pac-Man* coin-op units as authentic ones—and very likely a lot more.

Around the turn of the last decade, the dodgy publishers stole from the coin-ops without restraint. Anything in an arcade or a video-game cartridge was in season for some of these outfits. *Meteoroids in Space (Asteroids), Tubeway II (Tempest)* and *Crossfire (Targ)* are three of hundreds of possible examples of home games that aped major coin-ops.

Computer gaming tried to break away from excessive imitation in the mid-to-late 1980s, and sales rose encouragingly as a result. Then the lure of cheap European product grew irresistible, and hundreds of generic side-scrolling action games swamped the business in red ink in 1989 and the first half of 1990.

There's nothing wrong with a game that fits within an established genre. The development of game categories is a natural byproduct of the popularity of this form of entertainment. Other mass media, like TV, movies and books, have such categories. I am trying to draw a distinction, however, between games that are original within their genre and those that display little innovation or creativity. *Star Wars* is indisputably in the science fiction category, but it is fresh in theme and execution. There are a hundred grade-Z variations on George Lucas' masterpiece that are also in the science-fiction category, but they brought nothing new to the party.

Originality is in short supply these days. In cartridge country, the prime Japanese strategy is to dress up last year's hit in even better audiovisuals, add a few levels or a couple of weapons and launch it as *this* year's smash. If the technological leap is impressive enough, the new generation title racks up big sales, but if the improvement is marginal, the cartridges' fate can often be learned near the bottom of the sales chart.

Judging by the number of "me, too" flight simulators, kinetic puzzle games and fantasy role-playing adventures in which the hero must save a kidnapped princess, I'd say that the U.S. dominated computer-entertainment field has little to brag about concerning originality, either.

The brutal truth: It's easier to get a derivative, unoriginal game published today than a game with substantial new elements. There's no conspiracy to leech creativity out of interactive electronic entertainment, but there are forces pushing companies in that distasteful direction.

Marketing has replaced product development as the prime mover at most video- and computer-game publishers. That means there's less concern with the content of the product than with presenting it advantageously

Marketing-oriented publishers usually embrace two main strategies. One is to tie every product to a license, even if the game has no overt connection with the property. Sadly, all too many license-based games are time-critical projects. Marketing decrees that the game reach stores while the movie, TV show or comic book is still hot, so the game can benefit from publicity and advertising for the original property. That often means cobbling a game together from as many prefab parts as possible to get the game out on time. Originality takes a back seat to economic necessity.

The other basic strategy is to rely on track record. The ruling assumption: If a title sells well, another a lot like it will make money too. The nugget of wisdom in this philosophy is that a new game in a hot genre gets a jump start compared to one in a less popular format.

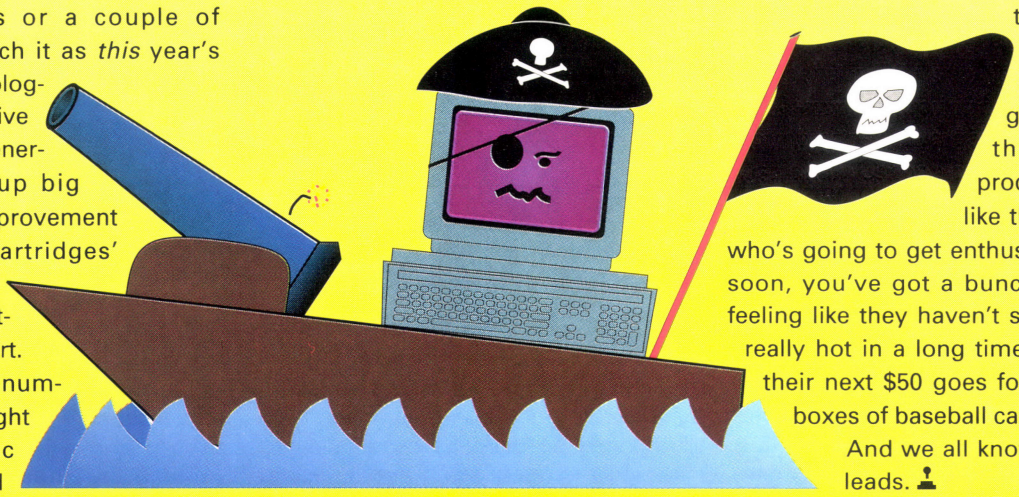
Unfortunately, it also leads to dozens of copycat games. Since the apostles of track record usually expect the imitative game to sell some percentage of the hit that established the benchmark, the product-development crew must keep costs as low as possible. And then come the off-the-shelf play mechanics.

My concern with originality is based on more than ivory tower aesthetics. I want each computer and video game to be a unique and exciting experience, but there's practicality behind the idealism.

Unoriginal games don't sell as many copies as innovative ones. Many factors contribute to the current decline in the sales of 8-bit cartridges for the NES, but the cutback hasn't hit all titles equally. Ones that feature a major theme, play or technological breakthroughs now sell at least twice as well as those that incorporate nothing new of importance. Nintendo's near monopoly of its newest generations of chips allows it to attain this critical level of innovation more consistently than publishers who can't afford to use them in their games, which helps explains why many third-party cartridges have taken a pounding at retail.

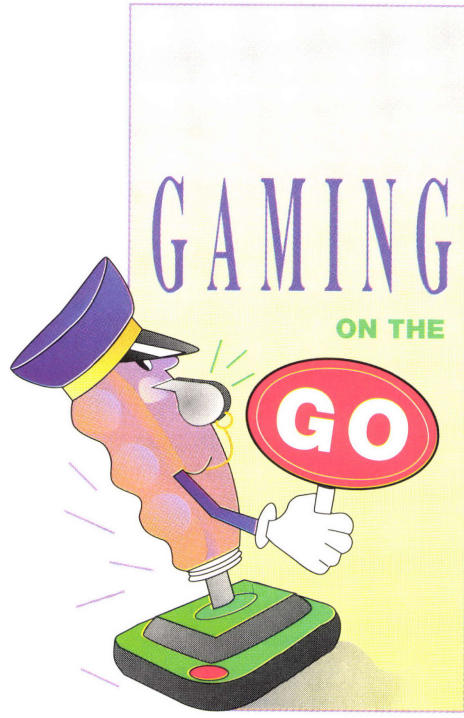
Whenever the software market becomes unbalanced in the direction of too many imitative games, it hurts the whole industry's image with consumers. New products are the best way to excite a hobby like electronic gaming. If those new products are just like the last batch, who's going to get enthusiastic? Pretty soon, you've got a bunch of gamers feeling like they haven't seen anything really hot in a long time, and maybe their next $50 goes for a couple of boxes of baseball cards.

And we all know where *that* leads.



COMPUTER ART BY BRIAN SPIELVOGEL

GAMING ON THE GO



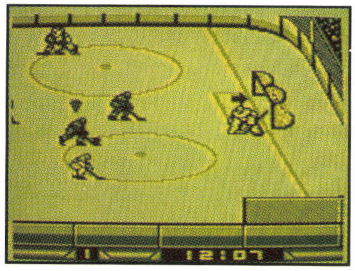
by
Chris Bieniek

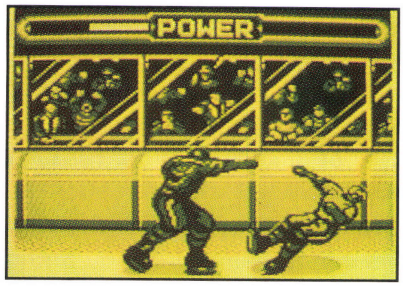
We'll dispense with the formalities this month—we've got a fresh batch of above-average Game Boy stuff to look at and a Lynx title that's bound to turn the portable-gaming world on its ear. Hope your batteries are charged-up, cause here we go.

Blades of Steel

Ultra for the Game Boy

This is the first hockey game for any of the portable systems and it's a killer. Like the NES game of the same name, it's a full-featured five-on-five hockey simulation with realistic graphics and a relentlessly quick pace.





A new programming technique allows* Blades of Steel *to have very fast action while keeping the screen blur to a minimum.

Blades of Steel lets you play a single game or a tournament in a league of eight teams. There's also a "practice" mode that lets you work on your fighting skills (you mean they actually *practice* this stuff?) and penalty shots. The teams don't seem to have different strengths and weaknesses, though the computer plays a pretty fair game—you may see some unusually high scores, but you'll rarely win or lose by a big margin. There's also a two-player mode that requires another Game Boy and another copy of the game to play it.

Ultra told me that the folks who develop their software in Japan came up with a new programming technique that let them do *Blades of Steel* on the Game Boy without sacrificing the fast action. That sounded like a publicity gimmick...until I saw the game for myself. Now, I don't know much about fancy algorithms or the way LCD screens work, but I can vouch for the fact that *Blades of Steel* is one heck of a fast game, and there's something about the way the screen scrolls that keeps the dreaded "Game Boy blur" to a minimum.

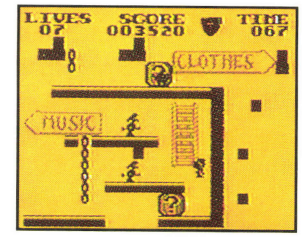
Finally, *Blades of Steel* is recommended because it doesn't simply ape its predecessor and hope for the same kind of success. In some ways, the Game Boy version of *Blades of Steel* is actually better than the full-sized NES original. Sure, the color is gone, and you won't hear that digitized voice barking, "Get the pass!" every time you touch the rubber (well, some people might call the latter an improvement). But the animated closeups of goals and the angry faces of ready-to-fight players are unique, and the completely new stereo soundtrack makes my ears extremely happy.

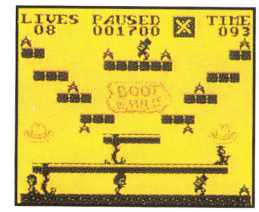
Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure

LJN for the Game Boy

I had high hopes for this one, especially after watching the game's amusing introduction. Bill S. Preston, Esquire, and Ted "Theodore" Logan aren't exactly Laurel and Hardy, but you could say that their success in film and on TV has been...er, "most unprecedented." In the opening, the boys introduce themselves as "Wyld Stallyns" (with the ubiquitous "air guitar" posturing and sound effects) before explaining the game's plot as only they can.

But after that, it's all downhill as the terrific twosome's time-traveling tour is turned into an aimless platform-jumping contest, with only brief intermissions and awkward symbolism to refer to the theme of the film it's based on. Basically, Bill & Ted appear in different places of the world at different times in history, where they leap around and pick up glowing objects while avoiding enemies who are not always incidental to the time and place described at the beginning of each level. Many screens have rudimentary puzzles that need to be solved before you can advance to the next one—for example, you may be required to pick up the objects in a certain order, enabling you to take advantage of doors or platforms that appear or disappear at different times.





Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure, *by LJN, suffers from a painfully simplistic focus.*

Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure has a lot more in common with the old *Jumpman* and *Jumpman Jr.* computer games of the early 1980s than with the three-quarter perspective *Bill & Ted* game that appeared on the NES recently. The game has good music, but the graphics and game play are so nondescript that they really don't have anything to do with Bill or Ted—or anybody's idea of an excellent adventure.

What could have been a neat tie-in with a popular film and TV series has turned out to be a disappointing stab at a genre that's more than a decade older than the system it's played on. The game's concept is mostly to blame—instead of pushing the limits of the Game Boy's

capabilities, the developers seem to have limited their vision to a painfully simplistic focus. The result, while mildly entertaining, is a pair of "Wyld Stallyns" with a ball and chain attached to each leg.

A.P.B.

Atari for the Lynx

With its tiny low-resolution screen, you'd never expect the Lynx to be capable of reproducing the nuances of a full-sized arcade game like *A.P.B. (All Points Bulletin)*. On the contrary, this little 2-meg card is packed with pure entertainment, right down to the last bit. In fact, there's no reason to compare the Lynx version to the coin-op at all. This game is good enough to stand on its own as one of the best Lynx titles yet, and comparing it to any other game on any other system would be an insult to the creativity of the people who delivered this baby.

In *A.P.B.*, you're Officer Bob, a rookie fresh from the police academy, who patrols the city's streets in a squad car, searching for criminals who can fill his daily "quota." Sometimes he's not required to ticket any more than a handful of litterbugs and speeding taxicabs, but as the game progresses, he chases after bigger targets like drunk drivers and murderers. Often an all points bulletin will be issued, and Officer Bob also needs to look out for these high-stakes offenders and haul them into the station for big bonuses.

With an overhead view of Officer Bob's vehicle, players are free to cruise through the streets in any direction. There's a lot of exploring to be done, so you'll have to keep an eye on your gas gauge and the on-screen timer if you expect to get around town and make the required collars. That's the amazing thing about this game: the city is huge, and the hidden bonus objects and locations seem nearly limitless. You can even buy more time by visiting the donut shops and gas stations that appear at various locations.

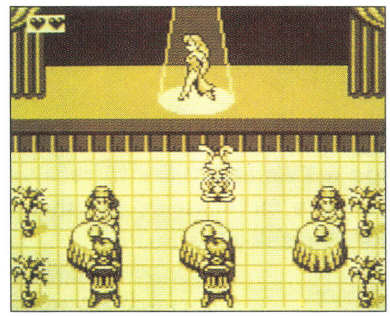
A.P.B. also features a ton of digitized voices and sound effects. When you meet your quota, the dispatcher calls out, "Car 54, return to station!" over your police radio. Asking other cars to pull over will get you a variety of spoken responses, from, "Sure thing, ossifer!" to, "No way, Jose!" or even, "Make me!" If you earn too many demerits, the hulking, goggle-eyed Sergeant Mulrooney bawls you out by breathing fire until your whole head is blackened and charred; the roaring "whoosh!" of his flaming halitosis will let you know it's "game over" time without even looking at the screen. Drive past a country & western bar, and you'll hear howls of "Yee-ha!" from the patrons inside.

While *A.P.B.* may not have the instant, universal appeal of a *Pac-Man* or a *Tetris*, it doesn't take long for most people to get hooked by its innovative game play. You'll howl, you'll groan, you'll laugh out loud—and you'll be darn glad you bought a Lynx.

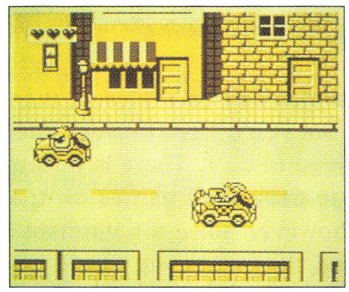
Who Framed Roger Rabbit

Capcom for the Game Boy

Don't confuse this cartridge with the mediocre *Roger Rabbit* game that hit the NES market over a year ago—the Game Boy version of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* is a surprisingly enjoyable adventure. We've looked at a lot of high-quality Game Boy titles this month, but I'd have to say that this is my favorite.



Capcom's* Who framed Roger Rabbit *has slick graphics, nifty 1940s-style music and clean, logical controls.



I've always been fond of the lush, animated intermissions that tell the story of games like Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden* between each stage of arcade action. I believe it was Tecmo who came up with the term "cinema display" to describe these minicartoons ("like watching a movie," the reviewers said), and lately this phrase has come into general use in discussing any game that includes such a feature. Well, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* is like an interactive "cinema display" that lasts for the entire game. It's a cartoon that you can carry in your pocket.

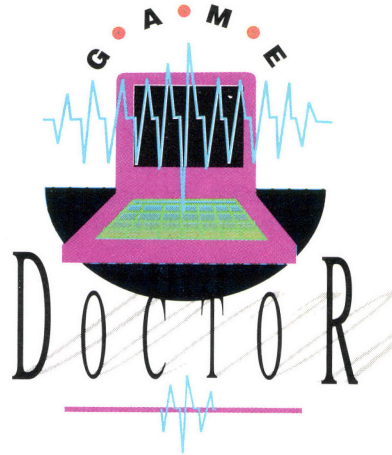
The game's plot includes dozens of references to the movie it's based on. Crafty Toon-hater Judge Doom has sent his five Weasel henchmen to kidnap Roger's wife Jessica, and you get to play the part of Roger as he works with private detective Eddie Valiant and tries to reclaim his bride and have Doom arrested.

I can't say enough about this game's slick graphics, nifty 1940s-style music and clean, logical controls. It's basically a simple adventure game—you have to get the password from Lucy before you can enter the "Ink and Paint Club," you must get a trolley ticket from Eddie before you can ride to the other side of town, and so on. But you will need a certain degree of control-pad skill, since you'll have to dodge bad guys and bop them with your Acme "punch glove" as you roam the maze-like streets of Toontown.

Once you've finished *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, you may not be too interested in playing through the same adventure again. Ironically, that may be the key to the game's success. Instead of using valuable program space to make the game more flexible and encourage repeated play, Capcom has stuck to a strict, fairly linear story line that allows for a lot of unique sequences along the way.

For example, there's a scene early in the game where Roger has to hide in the closet in Eddie's office while one of Doom's weasels barges in to check the place out and make idle threats. During this time, the screen shows Roger's viewpoint as he peeks out nervously from the door's thin slats and waits for Eddie to tell him that the coast is clear. You don't gain any valuable information from inside the closet, it's just a neat little intermission that illustrates my point perfectly: this type of extravagance is rarely seen on the Game Boy, and it practically guarantees that you'll get your money's worth the first time around.

Next time, we'll take a look at a couple of hot, new Lynx titles and more Game Boy stuff, and we'll try to cover the Game Gear software that slipped through our fingers this month. Feedback is always welcome; send your comments and suggestions to VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT, Attn: Gaming on the Go, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210.



GAME DOCTOR SPECIAL 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION!

by the Game Doctor

It's a big day here at the Doctor's office. The celebration is in full swing, the TV camera cables are strung across the floor like a thousand joystick wires and I've taken a few moments out from the revel to sneak off to a word processor and write this installment.

As I've mentioned in previous columns, everyone who has a question printed this month gets a Game Doctor Prize Packet, so let's get right to it!

question

What exactly is *in* a "Doc's Package?"

—Mike Duffy
Hopkinton, MA

answer

You'll have a chance to see for yourself now, Mike, but the Doc's Prize Packets are a random collection of buttons, T-shirts, plastic bags, watches and other goodies imprinted with the names of electronic games. These knickknacks come the Doc's way on a regular basis, so I keep a special box full of items from which I put together the Prize Packets.

question

Here are some questions that I think readers would like answered:

1) If the battery in a save-progress game pack ever runs out, what can be done to replace it?

2) Does the number of megahertz frequency cycles in which the CPU of a system runs at matter as far as what that system can do?

3) Is the Nintendo Game Boy capable of digitized speech?

4) I recently saw numerous tricks on Sega Genesis games that involve cartridge removal while the unit's power is on. If those tricks are not glitches or bugs and are built in on purpose, then is the Genesis actually designed for such a process?

5) Can video-game consoles damage a TV's capability to receive and translate radio waves and thus make the TV display low quality?

—Marco Roxas
Upper Marlboro, MD

answer

Great Game Doctor Qs. Some answers:

1) Batteries can be replaced, theoretically, but you'd have to crack open the cartridge to do it. There is no way to salvage the saved games on that battery, however, since the moment it is removed, the memory is wiped.

2) MHz (cycles per second) can be one of those deceptive stats we discuss all the time in this column. All processors are different; an IBM running at 12 MHz is *not* the same as a video-game system running at that speed. Remember that the new Super NES runs at a mere 3.58 MHz, which seems a little slow, but other processors can pick up the slack. The speed is important, in other words, but you have to look at the entire system setup before reaching a fair conclusion.

3) Some digitized speech has been done on the Game Boy, but the system doesn't encourage it. "It's very, very hard, and we've been working on it for months," one industry insider told me. Without some additional software-based chip technology, don't expect to hear much chitchat on the Game Boy.

4) Yanking a cart out of or inserting a cart into a live system is like a shock to that game unit's system, and the results are unpredictable. Do the Doc a favor, okay? Don't do this!

5) Except for burn-in, which hasn't been a significant problem for video games in almost two decades, video-game systems won't really hurt your TV, but if your RF box's shielding is inadequate, it might hurt reception.

question

Lately I've heard from several magazines about a new TurboGrafx-16 game entitled *Impossimole*, but no mag has given me any info about its content, plots, levels, etc. Can you help me?

—Justin Hall
Upland, CA

answer

Adventure: Impossimole is slated for a November '91 release by NEC. It involves the adventures of a mole who is kidnapped by an alien while at the beach spaceship. The aliens give him super powers, thus creating Impossimole, in order to save their planet in a five-level side-scroller.

question

When I received *Shadow Dancer* for the Genesis, I was amazed by all the new technology programmed into it. There were things in the game that I

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thought were beyond the capabilities of video-game systems. For example, in the first stage there is a burning town that sways back and forth in perfect motion. How is this done?

—Aaron Cline
Bliss, ID

answer

The various special effects seen in these games are a combination of sprites, parallax technology and old-fashioned illusion. An unusual use of sprites can also be seen in EA's *John Madden Football,* where the yard lines and on-field numbers are a combination of sprites and background graphics, combined in a clever way to give the illusion of animated movement on the gridiron.

question

I've been studying digital electronics for about a year, and I am thoroughly intrigued with the technological advancements that video games have made. I wonder if home video games will ever replace coin-op arcade games. I find the logic of digital circuitry very simple, but to me, the circuitry itself is very complex and confusing. It's mind-boggling how just eight or 16 bits can produce amazing graphics and realistic sound.

When I buy video games like *Legend of Zelda* and *Dragon Warrior,* I wonder if the battery in the cartridge recharges whenever it's played, or will I have to throw away the game after five years and buy another one?

—Chris Webb
Franklinton, LA

answer

Home video games have already put a serious dent in the coin-op market, but by and large, it's been a question of arcade-game manufacturers shooting themselves in the foot. The only advances or innovation seen in coin-op games over the past five years have been in terms of sound and graphics; the games themselves remain the same tired rehashes and genre contests. The bottom line is that the arcades have got to offer players something they can't get at home and, with a few exceptions (mostly hydraulic-based sit-down units), they have failed to do that.

I suspect, however, that arcades will evolve over the next ten years into different kinds of entertainment retailers, emphasizing participation (such as Photon—a group light-gun type of game—does), sophisticated simulators and modem play.

Those batteries on the backs of video games will eventually die, but that doesn't mean you'll have to toss your game; only that you won't be able to save your adventures.

Good luck in the world of digital electronics, Chris!

question

I was wondering, exactly how do passwords work? Does each number or letter in your password represent a certain position or weapon in a game? When you put them all together do you get what you had when you left off? If so, how does that work when you have two copies of the same game and the password from the one you've played works in the one you haven't?

—Oliver Puppel
Sturgis, SD

answer

Great questions, Oliver. Passwords are basically the equivalent of an automatic-options screen. When you insert a cartridge, typing in the passwords communicates a list of instructions or settings to the cartridge. One letter in the password, for example, tells the program which level you're at. Another might tell the program that you're carrying a battle-ax, and so on. It doesn't matter how many copies of the same game you use, the same instructions will be communicated.

The more (different) instructions that have to be communicated, the longer the password will have to be. In some games, the password represents only the level the gamer was last at, while in others there are long lists of spells, weapons and characteristics that must be tracked.

question

I have noticed that all Game Boy cartridges have the code "DMG-XX-USA" stamped on them somewhere. "XX" is a two-character abbreviation of the name or type of game. My question is, although the "USA" must be United States of America, what does "DMG" mean (Department of Miniature Games maybe)?

—Gregg Woodcock
Garland, TX

answer

Love this Q, Gregg! Nintendo is pretty tight-lipped about this stuff, but our best guess is that it stands for "dot matrix game," which seems to be Nintendo's generic code for Game Boy product, just as "SHVC" is the Super Famicom code.

That about wraps us up for this month. I've got a party to get back to, after all. But before I go, let me thank you great readers for sticking with this column. Whether you're a newcomer or an old-timer, every time I read through your letters I am flattered that such obviously intelligent and inquiring minds are coming to me for information. Also, no doctor works alone. Company spokespeople like Tricia Latz at NEC and friends like the folks at Westwood Associates and, especially, my technical advisor Seth Mendelsohn of Virgin Games are largely responsible for any value this column has. And I don't want to forget Game Nurse Becky, who helped in packaging all these Prize Packets!

Now we start our second decade. Be here next issue for more Qs and As about the world of electronic gaming and news of the International Correspondents Club we mentioned a few issues back! Until then, aloha...and thanks!

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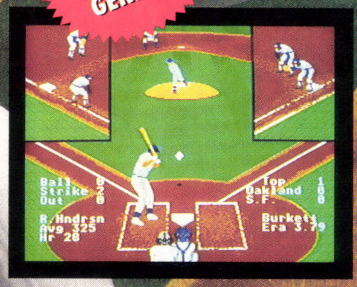
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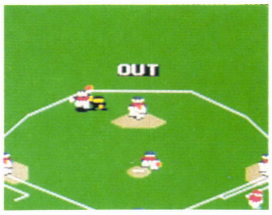
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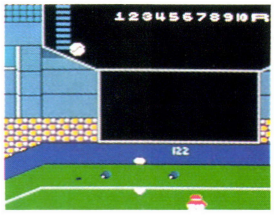
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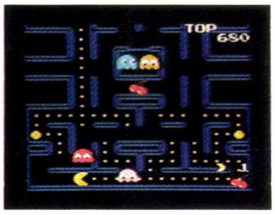
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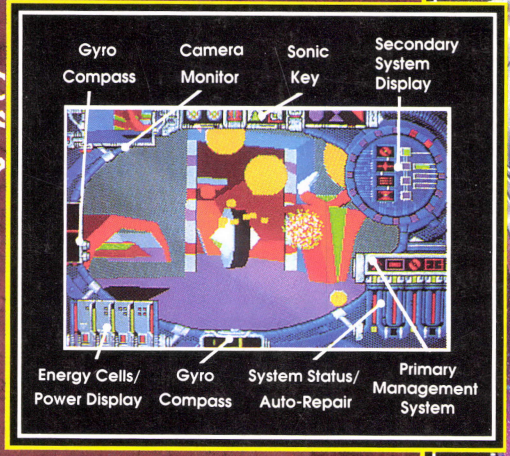
CYBERCON

complex protecting Cybercon III's brain stem and deactivate it.

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THE ASSEMBLY LINE

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